

LEGENDS OF OUR FATHERS

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LEGENDS OF OUR FATHERS

A COLLECTION OF
LEGENDS FROM ANCIENT
RABBINICAL WRITINGS

From the Creation to Joseph

COMPILED AND TRANSLATED

BY

HYMAN E. GOLDIN

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PREFACE

This book is an attempt to familiarize the reader with the heroes of the biblical period as pictured in the old rabbinic literature.

It is needless to point out the object of such a collection of oriental narratives, for the reader upon perusing same will be the best judge.

The author desires to offer an apology for not giving origin after each narrative. Most of the stories being pieced together from various works, it would be burdensome to the reader to be diverted from the topic by constant notes.

The main writings, wherefrom these legends were collected, are :

1. Babylonian Talmud.
2. The various Midrashim, known as Rabbah.
3. Midrash Tanhuma.
4. Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer.
5. Sefer Hajashar.
5. Yalkutim.

All kinds of illustrations were omitted in this edition for the reason that they tend to minimize the picturesqueness of the imagination.

THE AUTHOR.

New York, March, 1921.

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Legends of Our Fathers

FROM THE CREATION TO JOSEPH

CHAPTER I

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

1. God Consults the Torah



TWO thousand years before God created heaven and earth, He made seven things. One of these was the Torah, written with black fire on white fire. When God was about to create this world, He spoke to the Torah and said: "In thy opinion would it be advisable to create the earth?"

"O Lord God," answered the Torah, "a king without an army, without courtiers and attendants, hardly deserves the name king, for none is nigh to do him homage. But, merciful God, the man who it is Thy desire shall rule the earth will be sinful and will disregard the laws Thou hast entrusted me."

"Let not the sinfulness of man trouble thee," replied God. "Repentance was created by Me long ago, and people who are sinful will be able to mend their ways and be forgiven by Me. Then Paradise and Hell were created by Me to serve as reward and punishment. Finally, the Messiah will bring salvation to the earthly world, by putting an end to sin."

2. Justice and Mercy

Having thus satisfied the Torah, God said to Justice: "Go thou and rule the earth which I am about to create."

Several worlds were then created by God, but each displeased Him and He destroyed them all. Justice was too severe a ruler, and the worlds created could not meet with God's approval.

He turned to Mercy. "Go, thou, O Mercy," He said, "and together with Justice rule over the world I am about to create. Ruled by Justice alone, no world can exist."

God then decided to create our world and to have it ruled over by both Mercy and Justice.

3. The First and Second Day

The world was created in six days. On the first day the heavens and the earth were made. In the beginning God created darkness to reign upon the earth, but later He wrapped Himself in a white mantle, the brightness of which lighted up the world from one end to the other. This light, which was created at the very beginning, was not the same as the light from the sun. The first was so brilliant that it enabled man to see the world at a glance from one end to the other.

On the first day God also created wind and water, the duration of the day and the duration of the night.

On the second day God created the firmament, or the partition between the waters above and the waters below. On this day Hell, fire, and the angels were also brought forth by God.

4. Unity

Until the third day the entire earth was a plain covered with water. God then ordained that the water be gathered together in one place. When the earth heard this from the mouth of God, it immediately formed into hills and mountains, thus producing many valleys into which the water might descend. But the water, after having descended into the valleys, again overflowed its banks and boasted: "I am the mightiest of all the creatures that God has made. Let me overflow the entire earth again, because here in the narrow valleys and lowly spots there is not sufficient room for me."

God, hearing these boastful words, rebuked the water and said: "Do not boast of thy strength, O Water. Lo, I will order the sand to make a boundary for thee which thou shalt not be able to pass."

The water, beholding the grains of sand and seeing that they were very small and light, despised them and said: "What can these small, weak things do to me? The smallest of my waves will pass over them, and scatter them all over the earth."

The biggest grain of sand saw that his smaller brethren were greatly frightened at the boastful words of the water. He called them together and said: "Brethren, fear not; true, we are small, weak and powerless when each of us is for himself. Separately, we would fly into the endless abyss should the slightest wind blow upon us. Let us then unite and live in peace one close to the other and never separate. United we shall become very powerful, and the boastful water, knowing our strength and power, will no longer despise us."

The grains of sand listened to the wise words of their elder brother. They flew together from all the four corners of the earth, united and rested upon the shores of the seas in great heaps, thus forming an impassable barrier around the ocean.

The water looked at the sand again, and seeing that it was very powerful, it trembled and recoiled.

5. Pride

On the third day God created also all kinds of plants. First, He created the cedars of the Lebanon and other great trees. Because they were created first, these trees became very proud and shot up high in the air.

"I detest pride," said God, and He at once made iron, the material with which trees are cut down. The trees began to weep, and God said to them: "Weep not; you yourselves will furnish the axe with a handle. Without your aid the iron will not be able to do aught to you."

6. Jealousy

On the fourth day, God created the sun, the moon, and the stars. At first the light of the moon was equal to that of the sun. This fact greatly displeased the moon. She presented herself before God and said: "Master of All the Worlds, Thou hast

created the sun and the moon, and Thou hast given to both the same amount of light. If anyone looks at them, he will not be able to distinguish one from the other. Is it not becoming that one of them should be greater than the other?"

"I have hearkened unto thy words," said God, "and know that thou wouldst have Me make thee greater than the sun. Therefore, from this day on, thy light shall be reduced to one-sixtieth of what it is now, and all living things shall know that the smaller light is the moon, and the greater light is the sun."

"Shall I be punished so severely for having spoken a single word?" pleaded the moon.

"In the future world," said God, "I shall make thy light again equal to the light of the sun."

The moon was not yet satisfied. "O Lord," she said, "and the light of the sun, how great will it be then?"

"What! Thou still plottest against the sun?" exclaimed God angrily. "As thou livest, in the world to come, his light shall be sevenfold the light he now sheds."

"The punishment meted out to me is greater than I can bear," wailed the moon before God.

"Therefore," replied God, "I shall set the stars in heaven to accompany thee on thy journey at night."

Thus God put all the stars in heaven, to accompany the moon.

On the fifth day God took fire and water, and of those two elements He made the fishes of the sea. On the same day He made also all kinds of winged fowl.

CHAPTER II

ADAM

1. The Creation of Man.



ON the sixth day of the Creation, God made all kinds of animals. His work having been completed, God sat upon His holy throne and myriads upon myriads of angels waited upon Him. Then God said to the angels: "Let us make a man in our form and image, and he shall rule over all the works of My hand; all the beasts of the earth and all the fowl of the air shall dread him."

"O mighty God," pleaded Truth, "do not create man, because he will greatly annoy me with lies and falsehoods."

"O merciful God, do create man," begged Mercy," because he will be merciful to all Thy creatures."

Then came Peace, and, weeping bitterly before God, said, "Wherefore, O God, shouldst Thou create the man when he will keep all the creatures of the world from living in peace?"

"O Lord, may my words find grace with Thee," pleaded Justice. "Do create the man, for he will love me, have pity upon the poor and needy and help them in their distress."

God heard all these pleas and He cast Truth down from heaven to the earth.

"O Lord, why hast Thou done this to Truth?" cried the angels. "Is not Truth Thine own seal?"

"The man will love Truth with all his heart and soul," said God. "Truth will then return to Me."

God then said to the angel Gabriel: "Go and fetch Me dust from the four corners of the earth and I will create man with it."

Gabriel went forth to do the bidding of God, but the earth drove him away, and refused to let him gather some dust.

"Why, O Earth, dost thou not hearken to the voice of the Lord, thy Creator?" asked Gabriel.

"I am destined to become a curse, and be cursed through man, and if God Himself does not take the dust from me, no one else shall ever do it."

When God heard this, He stretched out His hand, took dust from the four corners of the earth, and created the first man with it. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, but the man lay still.

While the first man thus lay still, God revealed the whole history of mankind to him. He showed him each generation with its leaders and its prophets. And when He showed him the great soul of David, he asked: "How long is this soul destined to live?"

"But one minute of life is apportioned to this great soul," answered God.

"And how long am I destined to live?"

"One thousand years."

"Reduce then my own years to nine hundred and thirty. I will make a gift of seventy years to this soul."

One hour passed. Then the first man opened his eyes, and when he saw heaven and earth and all their hosts, he broke into praise of God and said: "How great are Thy works, O Lord."

Thereupon the angels approached God and said: "Why hast Thou created the man, when all his days shall pass in sorrow and distress?"

"Had I not intended to create the man," God said, "I would not have created the cattle of the earth, the fowl of the air, and the fishes of the sea. Know ye, also, that I have bestowed My spirit upon him and he shall rule over the works of My hand."

"What is man, that Thou regardest him so, and what is his nature?" they asked.

"His knowledge excels yours," answered God.

God then ordered all the cattle, animals, and fowl to pass in front of the angels, and He inquired of them: "Can ye tell Me the names of all these creatures?"

"O God, we do not know the names of all these creatures," answered the angels.

Then God called Adam and said: "Tell Me the names of all these creatures."

Adam answered and said: "The name of this creature is cow. The names of these creatures are donkey, horse, camel," and so forth.

Then God said: "What is thy name?"

"My name," said the man, "is Adam, because I am created from the ground (Adamah)."

"And what is My name?" asked God.

"Thy name is Lord," answered Adam, "because Thou art the Lord of all creatures."

And the angels came down from heaven and bowed to Adam. Only Satan refused to do homage to Adam as he had been bidden. Then said Michael, the angel, to Satan: "Do homage to the image of God. If thou dost not do it, the Lord God will break out in wrath against thee."

"If He breaks out in wrath against me," replied Satan, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will be like the Most High."

At once God flung Satan and his host out of heaven, down to the earth, and from that moment dates the enmity between Satan and man.

2. Eve

"It is not good for the man to be alone," said God. "I will make for him a mate."

When the earth heard what God had resolved to do, it began to tremble and quake. "I have not the strength," it said, "to provide food for all of Adam's descendants." But God pacified it with the words: "I and thou together will find food for them." Accordingly, time was divided between God and the earth; God took the night, and the earth took the day. Refreshing sleep nourishes and strengthens man, and affords him life and rest, while the earth brings forth produce with the help of God, who waters it.

God then caused deep sleep to overcome Adam, and when He was on the point of making Eve, He said: "I will not make her from the head of man, lest she carry her head in arrogant pride; not from the eye, lest she be wanton eyed; not from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper; not from the neck, lest she be insolent; not from the mouth, lest she be a tattler; not from the heart, lest she be inclined to envy; not from the hand, lest she be a meddler; not from the foot, lest she be a gadabout." God then took a rib from Adam's side, and as He formed it into the shape of a woman, He said to every limb and organ: "Be pure, be pure."

And, in spite of all these precautions, woman has all the faults God wished to obviate.

CHAPTER III

THE FALL OF MAN

1. The First Commandment



INTO the Garden of Eden, planted by God, Adam and Eve were sent to live. Out of the ground God caused to grow all kinds of trees which were very beautiful and on which grew fruits delicious to the taste. In the center of the garden stood the tree of life and the tree of knowledge.

"The fruit of every tree in the garden thou mayest eat," God commanded Adam, "but of the tree of knowledge, thou shalt not eat; for on the day thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die."

Adam and Eve lived happily in this Paradise, and did not have to till the soil nor do work of any sort. Angels brought them meat and wine, serving them like attendants. The animals, likewise, ministered to their wants. They understood the language of man, and feared the first human couple, for they respected the image of God.

2. The Crime

Among the animals the serpent was the most notable. Like man, he stood upright upon two feet, and in height he was equal to the camel. God created the serpent to serve man and to bring him silver, gold, gems and pearls from the ends of the earth.

When the serpent saw Adam and Eve living in luxury in the Garden of Eden, he grew very jealous of them, and one day he approached the woman, and said to her enticingly:

"Eve, why do you not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden?"

"God has commanded us not to eat from the fruit of this tree and not to touch it, lest we die," replied Eve.

While they were thus talking, she happened to pass by the tree. The serpent quickly pushed her against it, and when she touched its trunk, the serpent said: "See, Eve, you have touched the tree, and you are still alive. Know you, therefore, that even if you should eat of its fruit, you would not die."

When the serpent saw that Eve did not heed his words, he again spoke to her: "Know you not, Eve," he said, "that God Himself has eaten of the fruit of this tree? And that therefore He grew wise, great and powerful, and thus was able to create the world, and whatever is upon it? It is because of fear that He commanded you and your husband not to eat of this wonderful tree. He feared lest if you ate its fruit, and were as wise as He, you would be able to create other worlds."

But Eve would not be persuaded and the serpent became more insistent. "Lo, you and your husband were created last of all the creatures, and therefore you are wise and you rule over all the creatures that were created before you," he continued. "If you will not eat of the fruit of this tree, God will create some new creatures after you, and they will be stronger and wiser than you. They will rule over you, and you will perish from the earth."

The serpent then began to shake the tree violently, and brought down its fruit. He ate some of it and said: "As I do not die from eating the fruit, so will you not die."

When Eve heard this, she took some of the fruit from the tree and ate it. She also made her husband Adam eat it, and she forced the fruit on the animals and birds, that they might all fall under the same condemnation, and be subject to death. Then she approached the Phoenix and said to him: "Here is some of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the Garden of Eden, and you shall eat the same as all the other birds of the garden have done."

"God forbid," said the Phoenix, "that I should disobey His command." Eve then tried to persuade him, but he did not listen to her.

God thereupon said: "Because the Phoenix refused to obey Eve, he shall live forever."

And so it does.

At the end of one thousand years his body shrivels up to the size of an egg. From this egg a little bird emerges which continues to grow bigger and stronger until it attains its full size and strength. Then it lives for another thousand years.

Adam then heard the angels announce: "God betakes Himself unto those that dwell in the Paradise." He heard more, too. "What! He still moves about in Paradise?" exclaimed the angels in astonishment before God. "He is not yet dead?"

"I said to him," said God, "'On the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die.' Now you know not what manner of day I meant—one of my days of a thousand years, or one of yours. I will give him one of my days. He shall have nine hundred and thirty years to live, and seventy more to leave to his descendant David."

The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened because they ate of the tree of knowledge, and they knew that they were naked. When they became aware of their nakedness, they wept bitterly. With them wept the clouds, the sun, the stars, and all created things. The very angels in heaven were grieved by the fall of man. The moon alone laughed.

Adam and Eve tried to gather leaves from the trees to cover part of their bodies. But when they approached the trees, each one exclaimed: "There is the thief that deceived God, his Creator. Nay, the foot of pride shall not come against me, nor the hand of the wicked touch me." Only the fig tree let him take of its leaves.

3. The Punishment

When Adam and Eve heard God approach, they hid among the trees. Standing at the gate of Paradise, God asked, "Where art thou, Adam?"

"I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was ashamed because I was naked," answered Adam.

"Who told thee that thou wast naked?" asked God. "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee not to eat?"

"O Lord of the World," said Adam, "as long as I was alone, I did not fall into sin, but as soon as this woman came to me, she tempted me. She gave me of the tree, and I ate it."

"I gave thee this woman as a mate," replied God, "and thou art ungrateful when thou accusest her, saying, 'She gave me of the tree.' Thou shouldst not obey her."

"What hast thou done?" asked God of Eve.

"The serpent persuaded me, and I ate," answered the woman.

"I created thee to be king over all the animals, cattle and beasts of the field," said God to the serpent, "but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore thou shalt be cursed among all the cattle and all the beasts of the field. I created thee to possess the power of speech; but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore thy mouth shall be closed, and the power of speech taken away from thee. I created thee to eat the same food as man; but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore, thou shalt eat dust all the days of thy life. I created thee to walk uprightly; but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore, thou shalt move on thy belly."

At that very moment angels descended from heaven, and cut off the serpent's hands and feet. He uttered a loud cry which was heard from one end of the earth to the other.

To the woman God said: "Because thou hast done this evil thing, thy suffering shall be very great. In great pain shalt thou bring forth children, and thy husband shall have control over thee."

"Because thou hast obeyed thy wife," said God to Adam, "the earth shall no more bring forth fruit trees for thee, like those in the Garden of Eden; but the earth shall bring forth thistles and thorns for thee, and thou shalt eat the grass of the field. Thy days shall be few, and full of trouble and grief. In death thy body shall be the prey of worms. Animals shall no longer fear and respect thee, and may even devour thee."

When Adam heard these words, he trembled, and big drops of sweat covered his face. "O merciful God," he exclaimed, "shall

I be likened to the cattle and eat grass with it from the same manger?" The Lord had mercy upon him and said: "Because thou art sorry in thy heart and criest unto Me, because of the sweat on thy face, thou shalt eat bread."

To the moon God said: "Because thou alone didst laugh at the fall of man, while all other creatures had pity on him, thy light shall be obscured. Instead of shining steadily like the sun, thou shalt grow old quickly, and thou shalt be born and die every month."

God was full of pity for Adam and his wife. He made clothes for them out of the skin stripped from the serpent and He clothed them. These garments possessed wonderful qualities. He who wore them became very mighty. Even the beasts and the birds of the woods feared the one who was arrayed in them. As soon as they caught sight of him they would fall down in awe.

In the twilight of the Sabbath eve, God commanded the angels to turn Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. God also ordained that the heavenly light, by which Adam could survey the world from end to end, should disappear.

When the order was thus given by God, Adam heard the angels call after him: "Adam will not abide in his glory over night!"

Then Sabbath came, presented itself before God, and pleaded: "Lord God of heaven and earth: Thou hast created the world in six days, and during these working days, Thou didst not punish any creature. Now, when the seventh day has come, which was blessed and sanctified by Thee above all other days, Thou dost intend to punish Adam. O Lord, have mercy upon the man and permit him to remain here this Sabbath day."

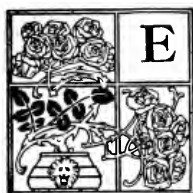
God listened to the words of the Sabbath, and He permitted the man to rest on this holy day. When the end of the holy day was drawing nigh, and the sun was about to set, God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Before leaving the Garden of Eden, Adam took with him the vines. That Adam and Eve should not come back into the garden, God placed an angel with a revolving sword of fire to guard the gate. Outside

the garden Adam and his wife for the first time saw the darkness and were terrified, for they knew not what darkness meant. When they were in the Garden of Eden there was no darkness; but there shone the original light which God had created upon the earth, by means of which one could see from one end of the earth to the other. In his great terror, Adam exclaimed: "Alas, now when I will be covered with darkness, the serpent will come and have his revenge on me." Then God gave him two hard stones. Adam took the stones, struck them one against the other, and a fire came out. Upon seeing this fire Adam and Eve were overjoyed, and exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord who created the light of the fire."

CHAPTER IV

FROM ADAM TO NOAH.

1. Cain and Abel.



VE bore a son, whom she named Cain. She then gave birth to another son, and this one she named Abel. When the boys grew up, Cain became a tiller of the ground, and Abel became a shepherd.

One day Abel selected the best of his flocks, and brought it as an offering to God. Cain likewise thought of bringing an offering to God. But first he ate his meal, and after he had satisfied his hunger, he offered to God what was left over, a few grains of flax seed.

God accepted favorably the offering of Abel, and sent a heavenly fire down to consume it, while the offering of Cain was rejected. Cain therefore grew angry at his brother and looked for an opportunity to kill him.

Once, when they were alone in the field, Cain said to his brother: "Come let us divide the world between the two of us."

"I am willing to divide the world between the two of us, as you desire," said Abel.

Then Cain took for himself the ground to till, and to Abel he gave the flock. Cain said to his brother: "Lo, I have taken my portion and you have taken your portion, and now beware you that you do not enter into my domain."

The envy which lay in the heart of Cain gave him no rest. One day he said to his brother: "Remove your foot, you stand on my property; the plain is mine." Then Abel ran upon the hills, but Cain cried: "Away, the hills are mine." Then he climbed the mountains, but still Cain followed him, calling: "Away! The stony mountains are mine too."

Once it happened that the flock of Abel ran over the ground Cain had been ploughing. Cain, upon seeing this, grew very angry and said: "Have I not told you to keep away from my portion?"

"Not till you have paid me for the skins of my sheep and the wool of their fleeces used for your clothing," replied Abel. In the struggle that followed both brothers wrestled for a long time and at last Abel knocked his brother down to the ground, and was above him. Cain entreated his brother and said: "Pray, brother, do not harm me. Are we not both sons of one father? Why will you kill me?" Abel in his kindness listened to the words of his brother and let him free.

But when Abel had turned his back and was about to depart, Cain suddenly fell upon him and began pelting all parts of his body with stones. At last one stone struck Abel on the neck and caused his death.

2. The Punishment.

"Now I must flee from my father and mother," cried Cain, "lest they will say that I have killed my brother Abel."

Suddenly, however, he heard a powerful voice calling unto him: "Thou canst flee from the presence of thy father and mother, but thou canst not flee from My presence, for even shouldst thou hide thyself in the most secret place, still will I be able to see thee."

"What hast thou done?" said God, for it was He. "Thy brother's blood is crying unto Me from the ground."

Cain was surprised and said:

"How dost Thou know what I have done? Lo, my father and mother who live with me on the same earth do not know what I have done, and Thou, O Lord, art in heaven, and still knowest my crime. Pray forgive thy servant's sin, for I regret what I have done." God said: "Thou hast regretted for the evil thou hast done. I shall make thy punishment more lenient: Thou shalt be a wanderer all thy life."

"If I am to wander all my life," pleaded Cain, "then whoever finds me will kill me."

God then put a sign of pardon on Cain, a horn which grew out of the middle of his forehead, and which warned those who found him to do him no harm.

After Abel was slain, the dog, which had kept his sheep, guarded his body. Adam and Eve sat beside it and wept, and knew not what to do. Then said a raven, whose companion was dead: "I will teach Adam a lesson." He dug a hole in the soil, laid his friend there, and covered him up with earth.

Adam seeing this, said to Eve: "Now, we will do the same with Abel." They dug a grave and there buried their dead son.

"I shall reward thee for this kind act," said God to the raven. "None shall ever injure thy young ones, and thy prayer for rain shall always be answered by Me at once."

When Cain walked away from the presence of God, and wandered aimlessly, all animals and beasts roared at him. They set their teeth against him and said: "Here is the man who murdered his brother. Come, let us gather together and tear him to pieces." Cain trembled greatly at their words, but all animals on approaching him saw the mark that God had placed upon Cain, and dared not injure him.

One day Adam met Cain, and looked with wonder on the token of pardon, and asked:

"How hast thou turned away the wrath of the Almighty?"

"By confession and repentance," said Cain.

"Woe is me!" cried Adam, smiting his brow. "Is the virtue of repentance so great, and I knew it not! And by repentance I might have altered my lot!"

3. Cain's End.

Lamech, the great grandson of Cain, grew very old and his eyesight failed him. He called Tubelcain, his son, and said: "Take me to the forest that I may hunt some animals there." Tubalcain led his father by the arm, and both went to the forest.

Arriving there, the father said to the son: "Look around you everywhere and when you see an animal, tell me about it and I will shoot at it with my bow and arrow."

Cain, who was a wanderer, happened to pass through the forest at this time, and Tubalcain, seeing something horned from a distance, took it to be some beast. "Let your arrow fly eastward," shouted Tubalcain to his father, "for I see an animal there." Lamech shot in that direction; the aim was good, and the seeming beast fell to the ground. Hastily both ran to the place where the victim lay dead. On approaching it, Tubalcain exclaimed: "Oh, father, you have killed something that resembles a human being in all respects, except that it has a horn on its forehead." Lamech knew at once what had happened—he had killed his ancestor Cain. Then he uttered a great and bitter cry. "Alas," he mourned, "I have slain my great grandfather Cain." In despair and grief he smote his hands together so forcibly that his son Tubalcain, who stood in front of him, was crushed between them and died instantly.

Being blind, Lamech was not able to return home, and remained seated for a long time by the bodies of Cain and Tubalcain. Toward evening, the two wives of Lamech, seeing that he had not returned home, went out to seek him and found him in the forest. When they saw the corpses and learned what had happened, they became very angry at Lamech, and refused to take him home. But Lamech pleaded with them and said that he had killed the two men without knowledge, because he was blind and could not see.

The three of them then went to Adam, who acted as judge and listened to their complaints. He decided the case in favor of Lamech and made peace between him and his wives.

4. Enosh

Eve, the wife of Adam, bore a third son whom she named Seth. Seth grew up to be a good man. To Seth was born a son whose name was Enosh. This Enosh knew how to draw pictures of all animals and birds, and of all things that are in heaven above, and on the earth below. Enosh stopped serving the true God in heaven, and persuaded all the people of his generation to worship the pictures he had made and to bow to them. Many

people obeyed him. They forsook the Lord God and bowed to pieces of wood and stone instead.

Therefore the anger of God was kindled against them and He caused the water of the sea to overflow and many people were destroyed. Yet the people continued sinning against God, and therefore the Lord rendered the mountains upon which they planted as hard as copper, and the earth produced nothing but thorns. There was a famine in the land and the people suffered greatly. Nevertheless, the people did not improve, but continued sinning against God.

Then God removed from them the appearance of His image, and they resembled the apes and monkeys. When the beasts of the forest saw them they feared them no longer and destroyed a great number of them. When the people still refused to serve the God in heaven, He said: "I will destroy all the people that I have created."

5. Enoch

To Enosh was born a son whose name was Kenan; to Kenan was born Mahalalel; to Mahalalel was born Jared, to Jared was born Enoch, and he, seeing the evil ways of men, despised them so greatly that he did not care to live among them. He therefore built for himself a hiding-place and hid there for many days. In that secret house he continually prayed to God that He should give unto man a pure heart, to love good and hate evil.

One day while Enoch was thus standing and praying to the Lord, an angel of God appeared unto him and exclaimed: "Enoch! Enoch!"

"Here I am," answered Enoch.

The angel continued: "Thus said God: 'Arise, get thee out of the place where thou hast hidden thyself. Go to thy fellow-men and teach them the right path they should walk in and the acts they should do.'"

Thereupon Enoch left his hiding place, went to the people and taught them to be merciful, just and righteous. From all

over the world they came to learn his wisdom and even kings and princes were among those who came to be his disciples.

One day all the kings of the world, who numbered one hundred and thirty in all, came to Enoch, and, bowing to him, said: "We desire that you reign over us, since you are so wise and kind."

Enoch then reigned over the people for two hundred and forty-three years, and during his reign there was peace and plenty. Then Enoch said to himself: "The people of the world are just and pious and I have now naught to do among them." He therefore decided to retire to his secret place. But he withdrew from the world gradually. First he would spend three days in his hiding place, in prayer and praise of God, and on the fourth day he would appear to the people and teach them. Thus he continued to appear every fourth day for many years. Then he appeared among them only once in seven days for a number of years; then he appeared once a month and finally once a year. The more he kept himself away from the people, the more holy he was considered by them. His face sent forth beams resembling those of the sun, so that the people feared to approach him.

One day all kings, princes, judges and officers assembled at the place where Enoch was wont to appear. When they saw him approaching, they all shouted with great joy: "May King Enoch live forever." Enoch blessed them and began to teach them the ways of God, in his usual manner. While he was thus speaking, an angel of God called to him from heaven, saying: "Hear, O Enoch, God has commanded thee to ascend to heaven."

Enoch then called together all the inhabitants of the earth, and said to them: "I have been commanded to ascend to heaven. Now, listen to my last words before I am taken away. If you will all live in peace and be kind to one another, and serve the Lord your God and love Him, then He will bless you, and you shall be as numerous as the stars in heaven."

A few more days Enoch spent among men teaching them wisdom and the knowledge of God. Then those that gathered near him saw a fiery horse come down from the skies, and they

told Enoch about it. He said: "The steed is for me, for the time has come when I must leave you to go up to heaven."

The horse descended to the earth and stood before Enoch. Enoch mounted the horse and all the people, numbering eight hundred thousand in all, followed him. On the second day, Enoch urged the people to turn back: "Go you home, lest death overtake you, if you follow me farther." Many of them went back, but a number remained with him for five more days. On the sixth day of the journey, he said to those who still followed him: "Go you home, for to-morrow I shall ascend to heaven, and whoever will then be near me will die." But some of his followers refused to go back.

On the seventh day, Enoch was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses. Snow and hailstones came down from the skies on the spot from which Enoch had risen and killed all the men who refused to leave him.

The angels in heaven, upon scenting the odor of dust from the earth, said to God: "Lord of all the worlds! How comes a mortal, born of a woman, into the heaven to serve Thee?"

God replied: "Enoch is My faithful servant who served Me when all the people abandoned Me and worshiped idols."

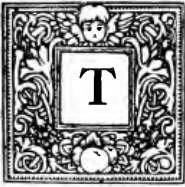
God thereupon gave Enoch everlasting life, blessed him with many blessings, and said: "Behold, I have made thee holy, and from now on thou shalt be considered an angel of the Lord of Hosts."

After Enoch had been taken up to heaven, his son, Methuselah, was proclaimed ruler of the earth by all the kings. He walked in the footsteps of his father, teaching truth, knowledge and fear of God to the children of men.

CHAPTER VI

NOAH

1. The Strange Baby



O Methuselah a son was born who was named Lamech.

Methuselah took a wife for his son Lamech, and she bore him a man child. When the babe opened his eyes, he lighted up the whole house, like the sun. He opened his mouth and praised the God of righteousness. His father, Lamech, was afraid of him and he fled to his father Methuselah.

"I have begotten a strange son," said Lamech to his father. "He is not like a human being, for his eyes are like the rays of the sun."

When Methuselah heard this from his son, he went to Enoch, to the end of the earth, to learn from him the truth about the newly born babe. Enoch heard Methuselah's voice and appearing before him asked him the reason of his coming. Methuselah told him the cause of his anxiety, and requested him to make the truth known to him. Then Enoch said: "The Lord will cause a flood upon the earth and destroy all living things. Only this newly born son will be left, and with him his three sons will be saved. Now, make this known to thy son Lamech, and call the child Noah."

There was another token that the child born to Lamech was appointed for an extraordinary destiny. The fingers of his hands were not attached together like those of all the people in those days.

When Noah had grown to manhood, he looked at his separated fingers and said to himself: "Surely, not in vain has God created these hands different from all other hands. He gave

me these special hands because He desires me to do with them work which could not have been done before."

He at once began making instruments with which to plow the ground, and to reap its harvest. He thus became the inventor of the plow, the scythe, the hoe, and all other agricultural implements. Before him men had worked the ground with their bare hands.

2. The Wicked Generation

The people in those days continued to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. The whole world was full of sin and people did not live in peace with one another. God said to Noah: "Thou art the only righteous man in this generation."

The angels, upon hearing these words from God, approached Him and said: "Whereof does the righteousness of Noah consist that he should find grace in Thine eyes, O Lord?" And the Almighty said: "When Enosh was born, and was requested to support his father, he said: 'I am ready to support my father.' When he was requested to support his grandfather, Enosh said: 'What have I to do with him? Is it not sufficient for me to support my father, that I also have to care for my grandfather?' All the generations that followed Enosh likewise refused to take care of their grandfathers. But when Noah was asked to support his grandfather, he replied thus: 'I am willing not only to support my grandfather, but all my relatives and kinsmen who are in need.'"

When the angels heard the words of God, they said: "Truly there is no one as righteous as Noah. Therefore let us save him from death."

God said to Noah: "Go and proclaim thus to all sinners: 'Return you from your evil ways, O men, and do not anger the Lord, lest He shall bring a flood upon you and destroy you quickly from the face of the earth.'"

Noah went to his grandfather, Methuselah the Righteous, and told him the words of God. The two pious men went together and proclaimed to the sinners thus: "Return you from your evil ways, lest you may die." The sinners refused to listen

to the words of Noah and Methuselah, and God said to Noah: "Make for thyself an ark and build it in a public place where everybody can see it, because after the expiration of one hundred and twenty years, I will bring a flood to destroy all living beings from the face of the earth."

Noah planted cedars, felled them when they were grown, and cut them into boards. When the wicked people saw Noah's doings, they said to him: "You mad old man, wherefore all this work? Wherefore all this precaution?" Noah answered: "Cease doing evil, O you men. Abandon your evil ways, and return unto the Lord with all your heart, lest He may bring a flood upon you, and destroy you from the face of the earth." But they laughed at him and said: "God will never bring a flood upon us, but upon you and your own family."

When the building of the ark was in progress, the wicked people, who were giants in stature and strength, came to Noah, inquiring of him in order to mock him: "Wherefore this ark?"

"God will bring a flood upon you," replied Noah.

"What can God do to us?" asked the sinners. "What sort of flood can He bring? If He sends a fire flood upon us, we know how to protect ourselves. If it is a flood of water, if it comes from above, it will never reach our necks; and if it bubbles up from below, the soles of our feet are large enough to dam up the springs. If He restrains the heavens so that no rain descends, we shall get water for ourselves from the many rivulets and streams that we have."

Noah was greatly grieved at their words of mockery, and begged them again to return from their evil ways. "The water will ooze out from under your feet," said Noah, "and you will not be able to stem it."

But it was all in vain.

Then God said to Noah: "I shall wipe out all substance which I have created from upon the earth, man, cattle, beast, and fowl, because they all have corrupted their ways upon the earth."

3. The Fallen Angels

When the generation of the flood turned towards evil, and practiced idolatry, two angels, Azael and Shemhazai, presented themselves before God and said: "Almighty Lord of heaven and earth, we begged of Thee at the creation of the world not to create man; now he is doing evil in Thine eyes."

Then God answered:

"What would have become of this earth and its hosts if there was no man created upon it?"

"Hadst Thou made us dwell upon the earth," replied the angels, "Thou wouldst see how righteous and good we would be."

But God hesitated. "I know," He made answer, "that when you go down to the earth you will be more sinful and do more evil than man."

But the angels pleaded: "Grant us permission to go down to the earth and dwell among men, and there we will be as righteous as we are in heaven." Then God said to the angels: "Go down and dwell among men."

When the angels came down upon the earth they forgot that they were angels and began to sin. One of the angels, Shemhazai, saw a very beautiful girl whose name was Istehar, and he said to her: "You know that I am an angel of God, and I can do whatever you will desire. Will you consent to be my wife?"

The girl replied: "If you will disclose to me the secret by means of which you are able to raise yourself to heaven, I will consent to become your wife."

"When I wish to fly," the angel answered, "I have just to pronounce the Name of the Almighty, which is not known to any human being."

"Would you teach me this Holy Name?" Istehar questioned.

The angel consented and taught her the Holy Name of God.

When Istehar learned this wonderful word, she pronounced it, and at once arose from the earth and went forth into heaven,

where God spoke to her: "Because thou hast refused to become the wife of an angel; and cared not to remain on the earth upon which thou dwellest, but preferred to come to heaven, and keep aloof from sin, I shall deal kindly with thee." God placed Istehar among the seven bright stars, that men may never forget her.

The two angels took for themselves wives and lived happily upon the earth, and to Shemhazai two sons were born. Then God sent the angel Metatron, who was known among men as Enoch, to tell Shemhazai that He would bring a flood and destroy the world. The fallen angel wept and grieved over the fate of the world and the fate of his two sons. "My two sons," he cried, "need for their daily meals a thousand camels, a thousand horses and a thousand steers. If the world came to an end, what would they have to eat?"

To the two sons there came strange dreams. One saw in his dream a great stone which had the shape of a table and on it was engraved the earth and everything on it, the ocean fields, cattle, fowl, and so forth. An angel of God came down from heaven, and with the sharp knife which he had in his hand erased the figures which were engraved on the stone, leaving only four words. The other son on the same night saw in his dream a beautiful orchard, planted with all sorts of beautiful fruit trees, the like of which he had never seen before. While he was thus enjoying the sight of the orchard, many angels came down from heaven with axes in their hands, and they cut down the trees, only one tree with three of its branches being spared.

When they awoke they ran to their parents and related their dreams. Their father told them that God would bring a flood upon the earth and destroy all living beings, and that only Noah and his three sons would be left. When they heard this, the two began to cry, but their father consoled them. Then he repented for the evil he had done and he suspended himself between heaven and earth. God did not forget his sins, and left him hanging in mid-air.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FLOOD

1. The Inmates of the Ark



WHEN the days of the flood drew near, Methuselah the Just died, and the people heard a great cry in heaven. They also saw animals gather at the place where Methuselah had died, lamenting over him. They then said to one another: "Come, let us lament over Methuselah, lest we shall be considered baser than the animals." They gathered around Methuselah and wept over him. When God saw this, He was so pleased that He postponed the flood for seven more days, the week of mourning for Methuselah. During these seven days of grace, God suspended the laws of nature, and caused the sun to rise in the west and to set in the east.

The people, however, soon forgot the wonderful things they had seen, and resumed their evil doings. God said to Noah: "Take all kinds of food and put it into the ark, and with thee thou shalt also take seven pair of all clean animals, and one pair of unclean animals."

Noah said: "Master of the World, I never learned the art of hunting. How then am I able to bring into the ark all animals and fowl?" God immediately ordered the angels to care for the animals and the fowl. The angels gathered all beasts, animals, and fowl and brought them to Noah.

Among these animals there was a reem, one day old, which was very huge. Noah looked at the animal and said: "How can such a monster enter my ark?" He made a hole in the wall of the ark, put the head of the reem in it, and tied its horns fast to the ark. When the water of the flood increased, the reem swam upon the face of the water behind the ark.

Og, the king of Bashan, came to Noah, and begged him: "Pray have mercy upon me, and admit me to the ark." Noah looked at Og, and thought to himself: "Truly this giant has no cause to fear the flood, for should even the water reach to a very great height, it will only come to his ankles." But Og insisted, and Noah said to him: "Swear to me that you will deal kindly with my children." When Og swore, Noah permitted him to sit upon one of the logs which were projecting from the ark. Noah made a hole in the door of the ark, and through it he gave Og his daily food and water.

When Falsehood saw that the end of all creation had come, he came unto Noah and said: "Pray let me go into the ark." Noah said: "Thou knowest that only pairs are permitted to come into the ark, and thou hast no companion with thee. Go, therefore, and look for thy kind."

Falsehood went away from the ark sadly, and he met Injustice. Injustice said: "Whence are you coming, Falsehood?" Falsehood was compelled to tell the truth for the first time in his life, and said to Injustice: "I came to Noah, and asked him to take me into the ark, but he refused and said: 'You shall not come to me unless you bring with you your kind.' Injustice, be you my companion, and we shall both come to the ark and be saved." Injustice said: "What reward will you give me if I grant your request?" Falsehood said: "Your reward will be very great, for I will give you all the wealth that I obtain through telling falsehoods." Injustice agreed. Both of them came to Noah, and he allowed them to come into the ark.

While in the ark, Falsehood accumulated great wealth by deceiving all those who were in it. But Injustice took all the wealth, and concealed it, and Falsehood was left poor, after all.

2. Noah in the Ark

The seven days of grace after the death of Methuselah had passed. When God saw that the people did not improve, He opened the windows of heaven and the water came down in torrents upon the earth. He also caused the fountains of the great deep to open, and great currents of water came forth.

There was a fearful roar of thunder and lightning and the very earth shook.

When the water reached the ankles of Noah, he, together with his good wife Naamah, the daughter of Enosh, and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japhath, and the wives of his sons, entered the ark. About seven hundred thousand men and women gathered around the ark. The mighty ones put their large feet upon the fountains of the deep to close them up, but were unable to do so. The weaker ones took their own children and threw them into the depths of the abyss, in order to dam up the fountains. The water ceased to well up for a short while, but after that it streamed forth again. The wicked still continued to throw their children into the depths of the abyss.

God, seeing the cruelty of the parents, rained upon them a flood of fire. Then all men ran to the ark and wanted to force it open. But as soon as they touched the ark, a fire appeared and scorched their feet, and they were compelled to retreat.

The sinful people then came to Noah and begged him for mercy, saying to him: "We are willing to return to God, and abandon our evil ways, only open the ark for us so that we may not die." Noah said: "For one hundred and twenty-seven years I have asked you daily to improve, but you would not listen. God is not a man that can be mocked at or ridiculed. All the evils He has foretold will now come upon you."

Noah then closed the door of the ark, and the people again made an attempt to break it open. Then God sent wild beasts against them, who drove them away from the ark.

When the water increased and began to toss the ark from side to side and all inside were violently shaken up, the lions roared, the wolves howled, the kine lowed, and all the animals uttered sounds of agony. Noah and his sons, too, thought that death was nigh and broke into tears and prayed to God.

As long as the flood lasted the sun and the moon were darkened and shed no light. The ark was illuminated by a precious stone, the light of which was more brilliant by night than by day. So Noah was able to distinguish between night and day.

Forty days and forty nights the flood came down upon the earth, and all living beings perished. At the end of these forty days, Noah wished to know if the water had diminished. He opened the window and said to the raven: "Go forth and see if the water has diminished."

"God dislikes me," complained the raven, "for He ordered that only two of my kind be brought into the ark. You too hate me, for you do not choose, as messenger, a bird of one of the kind of which there are seven pairs in the ark, but you send me, and of my kind there is only one pair. Now should I go out of the ark and perish by reason of cold or heat, my kind shall be entirely wiped off the face of the earth." But Noah insisted and the raven was compelled to do his bidding.

Out of the ark the raven saw the body of a dead man lying on the top of a tree. He flew to the corpse and began to peck at it. On seeing that, Noah refused to allow the raven to come back to the ark. God said to him: "Take the raven back to the ark, for some day, I shall make use of him." "When will that be?" asked Noah. And God answered: "Within one thousand three hundred and fifty-nine years, a righteous man (the Prophet Elijah) will cause the heaven to be restrained, so that there will be no rain. That man will have to flee to the wilderness, because of the anger of the king, and I shall then send the raven to bring him food."

Noah then sent forth the dove, but she could find no resting place and returned to the ark. Seven more days passed, and he again sent the dove out of the ark. The dove then went to the land of Israel, and God opened for her the gates of the garden of Eden, where she saw the wonderful fruit trees, bearing the most delicious fruits. She also saw many other kinds of lovely things to eat, but she took only a bitter leaf from an olive tree, which grew upon the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. When she plucked the leaf, she said: "It is better to receive a bitter leaf from the bountiful and merciful hand of God, than to receive dainties from the hands of men."

While in the ark, Noah and his three sons had no rest, for there were some animals and fowl that had to be fed by day,

while others had to be fed at night. The little zikta refused to accept any food from the hands of Noah, and he was greatly worried and grieved, because he did not know what its food was. He gave it vegetables and all kinds of fruits, but it refused to eat.

One day Noah opened a pomegranate, and a little worm dropped out. When the little zikta saw the worm, it hurried to it and devoured it. Then Noah understood that the little zikta was fond of worms. Noah was pleased on finding the right kind of food for the zikta, and from that day on he gave it all kinds of vegetables that had many worms in them.

As Noah went about in the ark feeding the animals and fowl, a great noise arose. Noah looked around and noticed that while all living things were demanding their food from him, the animal urshana was sleeping in a corner of the ark. Noah awoke urshana from his sleep and asked, "Why did you not demand your daily food from me?" Urshana said: "I noticed how hard you were working to feed all the inhabitants of the ark, and therefore thought I would rather suffer hunger than add more work to your hard task." When Noah heard these words, he said to the Urshana: "Because you were so kind to me, I bless you that you may live forever." God listened to the prayer of Noah and granted his wish.

One day Noah forgot to give the lion his portion of food. The hungry beast became enraged and struck Noah so violent a blow with his paw that he was lame forever after.

3. Noah Leaving the Ark

One year had passed and Noah and his children in the ark saw that the water of the flood had entirely disappeared from the face of the earth. God then said to Noah: "Go out from the ark, thou, thy wife, thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Let also all living things that are in the ark go out with thee."

When he stepped out of the ark, he began to weep bitterly at the sight of the great destruction the flood had caused, and he said to God: "O Lord of the World! Thou art called the Merciful, and Thou shouldst have mercy upon Thy creatures."

"O thou foolish shepherd," answered God, "now thou speakest to me. When I told thee that I would bring a flood to destroy all living things because of their wickedness, thou saidest nothing unto me. But thou wert satisfied because thou wast assured of safety, and thou didst not concern thyself about the ruin that the flood would bring. Now when thou art saved and the world is already laid waste, thou beggest for mercy."

Noah realized his error and he brought an offering to God that his sin might be forgiven. God accepted his offering favorably and blessed him. God was so pleased with Noah's repentance, that He promised him not to destroy the earth again by a flood. As a token of this, God set the rainbow in the clouds.

Noah then began tilling the ground and planting it. He found the vine which Adam had taken with him from the Garden of Eden when he was driven out. He tasted the grapes upon it, and finding them good to eat, he decided to grow them. While engaged in this work, Satan presented himself before Noah.

"What art thou planting here, Noah?" inquired Satan.

"I am planting a vineyard," replied Noah.

"What good is a vineyard to thee?" asked Satan again.

"The vines produce fruit which is good to eat; I can also make wine from it, which rejoices the heart of man," said Noah.

"I will help thee to plant thy vineyard," Satan offered, and then brought a lamb, a lion, a pig and a monkey. He killed these four animals in succession, and made the blood flow under the vine. Satan thus showed Noah that when a man drinks no wine at all, he is compared to the innocent lamb, that does no evil and causes no destruction; if he drinks one cup of wine, he feels as strong as a lion; when he drinks two cups then he resembles the pig that wallows in the mud; and if he drinks three or more cups and gets drunk, he behaves like a monkey, he dances around, sings and knows not what he is doing.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TOWER OF BABEL



UPON the death of Adam and Eve, their wonderful clothes of skin descended to Enoch, and when he was taken up to heaven, he gave the coats of skin to his son Methuselah. When Methuselah died, Noah took possession of the coats and kept them in the ark. While going out of the ark, Ham stole the coats from his father, and gave them to his son Cush who, in turn, kept them hidden for a long time. Cush gave the coats as a present to his son Nimrod, when he was twenty years old.

Nimrod put on one of the coats, and on going into the forest, all the animals, cattle and fowl bowed down before him. The people were greatly astonished when they saw this, and said to one another: "Surely Nimrod is the mightiest man that ever lived, therefore all the animals of the field fear him. Come, therefore, let us make him king over us, so that he can protect us from our enemies."

When Nimrod ascended the throne, he said to his people: "Come, let us build four towers, the tops of which shall reach the heavens. God has taken for himself the heavens, and to us He gave only the earth. When we shall have built the towers, we shall be able to go into heaven, fight with God, and put our own idols there. We will remain there until we shall be as mighty as God Himself. If God will restrain the heaven, so that no rain comes down, we will make holes there so that the water may come down. We will take our god, Ahuz, put a sharp sword in his hands, place him on the top of the tower, and this shall be a symbol to all future generations that there exists an everlasting war between God and the idols."

The people were pleased and cried: "Long live King Nimrod,

and his wise counsels!" They at once began to build the tower.

Many, many years passed by in building the tower. Day and night they worked on the tower until it reached such a great height, that to the people at the top, the highest trees appeared like the smallest grass.

At last the tower was so high that it took a year to mount it. When a man fell down from the top of the tower and was killed, nobody ever took notice of it. But when a brick dropped, the builders would assemble and lament over it saying: "Alas, when will there be another brick replaced in its stead?"

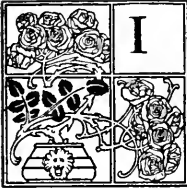
God looked down from heaven and said: "Verily, the people are bad, but I will not destroy them, because they love one another, and live in peace all together." God then confounded their language, and no man understood the holy tongue which they had used hitherto. One man would ask for some water, and his companion would hand him a brick, and when he would ask for bricks he would receive water, because his language was not understood. Angered by the disappointment, he would throw a brick at his partner and kill him. Many people were killed in this manner, and they finally stopped building the tower.

God changed the heads of those builders who intended to fight Him into those of monkeys, and the rest of the people He scattered all over the globe. A fire then came out from heaven and burned one-third of the tower; the earth opened its mouth and swallowed one-third of it, and the remainder of the great structure lay scattered upon the ground.

CHAPTER IX

ABRAHAM.

1. The Star in the East



IN the court of King Nimrod there was a high official whose name was Terah. When he was seventy years old, his wife Emtelai bore a son to him. That babe was our father Abraham.

On the day he was born Terah made a great feast, and all the servants and all the wise men of Nimrod came to the house of Terah. At night, while returning home from the house of Terah, they noticed a great star coming from the east, brightening the entire sky. They looked at the great sight in astonishment. While they were thus gazing at the star, it suddenly shot from the east across the sky and swallowed up the four stars at the four corners. Then the magicians said to one another: "This can mean nothing else, but that the son that was born to Terah will become very great. He will slay many powerful nations, and he will take possession of the entire world."

In the morning the magicians went and told Nimrod of the wonderful sight they had seen and its meaning. Nimrod was greatly terrified, and said:

"What is your advice, my counsellors? What shall we do?"

The magicians answered: "Buy the child from Terah for any sum he desires. When it will be in our hands we will kill it."

"Your advice is good," answered Nimrod. "Let one of you go and get Terah here."

When Terah came before the king, he bowed and said: "What is your wish, O King?"

"The son which was born yesternight to you will destroy

many powerful nations and will take possession of the entire world," replied the king. "Now take as much gold and silver as you like, and give me your boy, so that I may kill him, before evil comes upon us from him."

"O King, will you permit me to speak a few words to you?" said Terah.

"Speak on," said Nimrod.

"The other day one of your servants came to me," continued Terah, "and said, 'Give me the mule which the king has given you as a present, and I will give you a stable full of straw and fodder.' I told the man that I would not do anything without the advice of the king. Tell me, then, O King, shall I accept the man's offer or not?"

Nimrod replied: "Oh, what a fool you are! What use can you have of the straw and fodder, if you have no mule to eat it?"

"Of what use, then, will the gold and silver be to me," said Terah, "if I have no heir to inherit it from me?"

The king grew very angry at these words. When Terah saw that the anger of the king, had been kindled, he said: "The King may act as it seems good to him. Let him take my son without any reward."

"No," said the king, "but I want to buy your child from you for a great price."

"O King," said Terah, "pray give me three days' time to consider the matter and to comfort my wife Emtelai, who greatly rejoices over our child. After the three days have expired you may send for my son."

"Your wish is granted, O Terah," said the king.

Terah went home and told his wife of the king's command. She wept bitterly and did not eat for three days and three nights, neither did she drink nor sleep.

On the third day the king's servants came into the house of Terah and said: "Give up your child as you have promised. If you refuse you shall die a horrible death, together with all you have in your house. Not even a dog shall be left unto you."

The king's messengers were in great haste to fulfill the orders of the king, and they would not allow Terah to even speak a single word.

Terah then took one of his servant's children that was born on the same day with Abraham, and gave it to the king's servants. They brought the babe to the king, and he, thinking that it was Abraham, took the child and dashed its head against the ground. Abraham's mother took the real babe in her arms and left the city in great terror.

She wandered toward the desert, walking along the edge of a valley, until she came to a cave.

She entered this hiding place and, weeping bitterly, said to little Abraham: "Alas, that you were born at a time when the wicked Nimrod was king. If he hears that you are alive, he will surely kill you. Better that you should perish in this cave, than that my eyes should see you killed by the brutal king." She then took the garment in which she was clothed, and, wrapping it about the boy, she abandoned him in the cave, saying: "May the Lord be with you, may He not fail you nor forsake you."

Little Abraham was very hungry and wept bitterly, but God sent down the angel Gabriel to take care of him. The angel made milk flow from the little finger of Abraham's right hand and nursed him with it.

2. Abraham Acknowledges God

When Abraham was three years old, he crept out of the cave at night, and walked along the edge of the valley. He looked up to heaven and, seeing the stars for the first time, he said to himself: "How beautiful and lovely are these dots. To be sure these dots are the gods who created this beautiful world."

Little Abraham prayed to the stars the entire night. When dawn came the stars disappeared. Then Abraham said: "I will not worship these, because they are not gods."

When the sun came forth and little Abraham saw the whole world brighten up by its rays, he said: "Now this is god, and him will I serve." When the sun set, and there was darkness upon

the face of the earth, little Abraham said, on beholding the moon: "Perhaps this is god," and he prayed to the moon. When dawn broke and the moon disappeared, little Abraham was puzzled and cried out: "This, too, is no god. But who is the God who created this beautiful world?"

He was thus thinking to himself, when the angel Gabriel appeared and greeted him: "Peace be with thee."

"With thee be peace also," returned Abraham. "Who art thou?"

"I am the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God," was the reply.

The angel brought Abraham to a fountain of water and said to him: "Wash thyself in this fountain so that thou mayest become clean."

Abraham did so. Then Gabriel told him that the One who created heaven and earth, and gives life to all living things is the God in heaven. "This is God, and Him shalt thou worship," the angel explained.

When little Abraham heard the words of the angel, he bowed down, and knelt in prayer to God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Meanwhile Abraham's mother thought of him in sorrow and tears, and she went forth from the city to seek the cave in which she had abandoned him. Not finding her son there, she wept bitterly and said: "Oh, my dear little Abraham! Woe unto me that I bore you to become the prey of wild beasts, the bears and the lions."

While she was thus talking to herself, a boy came along and said: "Whom are you looking for, my dear lady?"

"I am looking for my little boy Abraham, whom I left here three years ago," she said.

"Mother!" Abraham exclaimed. "Sorrow not; he is alive. I am the same Abraham whom you left here three years ago. The merciful God in heaven has saved me from death."

"Who is the God you are speaking of?" asked the astonished mother. "Is there a God besides Nimrod?"

"Yes, mother," answered little Abraham, "the God of heaven and the God of the earth. He is also the God of Nimrod."

The mother then wept for joy, and taking Abraham by his arm led him home.

3. Abraham and the Idols

One day Terah said: "Abraham, my son, here is a basket full of idols. Go to the market place and sell them to the people."

When Abraham came to the market place, an old man approached him and said: "Sell me the mightiest god you have in your basket." Abraham, pointing to the biggest idol he had, said: "For this mighty god you will have to give me all the money you have with you." The old man was happy, took out all the money he had, and gave it to Abraham.

When the old man was about to go away, Abraham called after him and said: "Pray tell me, how old are you?"

"I am sixty years old to-day," answered the old man.

This idol is only one day old," said Abraham, "and you, a man sixty years of age, wish to bow down to it and worship it."

Give me my money back," exclaimed the old man, "and here is your idol."

Then an old woman came and said to Abraham: "Please choose for me a good and big idol, and I will worship him and love him. I had many gods in my house, but last night when I left the house, thieves came in and stole all the gods I had."

Abraham smiled and said: "You silly woman! your gods the hands of the thieves, and now you want to buy other idols, and bow down to them and worship them."

"You are certainly speaking truthfully," said the old woman, "but tell me, pray, whom else can I worship?"

"Worship the God in heaven, who created the whole world," said Abraham. The woman thanked him and went away.

Abraham then took the big idols, put a rope around their necks, and with their faces downward, he dragged them along the ground, crying aloud all the time: "Who will buy from me

an idol which has a mouth, but it speaks not; eyes, but it sees not; ears, but it hears not?"

When Abraham was fifty years old, his father said: "My son, stay at home and take care of the idols that are in the house, because you are not able to sell any of them in the market place."

A certain woman came to Terah's house at this time and said to Abraham: "Here is some flour which I have brought for your gods. Please give it to them to eat."

When the woman went out, Abraham took a hatchet and, repeating the words, **The Eternal, He is God, The Eternal, He is God**, he began breaking the idols. He started with the biggest and with the smallest he ended. He hacked off the feet of one, and of the other he crushed the hands. Abraham then put the hatchet into the hand of the largest idol and went out.

When Terah returned home and saw all the idols broken he grew very angry and called to Abraham:

"Why have you broken all my idols?"

"I did not do it," Abraham said. "It was the largest idol who shattered all the rest. A certain woman came and brought a meat offering for your idols, and I gave it to them to eat. All the idols began to quarrel among themselves and each one wanted to get it first. Their behavior angered the big god, so he took a hatchet and killed them all. Can you not see him standing there holding a hatchet in his hand? And if you will not believe my words, ask him, and he will tell you."

"You speak lies to me!" exclaimed Terah in great fury. "These gods can neither eat, drink nor do anything. Are they not wood and stone? And have I not myself made them? They cannot do the things you speak of. It is you who broke them and you who placed the hatchet in the hand of the big god."

"You speak truly," exclaimed Abraham. "The idols are nothing but wood and stone; but how then, O father, can you worship these idols in whom there is no power to do anything? Can these idols deliver you from your troubles? Can they hear your prayers?" And after having spoken these words, Abraham took the hatchet from the big god and broke it.

4. Abraham in the Fiery Furnace

Then Terah hastened to Nimrod, and bowing down before him said:

"O mighty King, the son that was born to me fifty years ago dissuades all the people from worshiping idols and even thee, the mighty god Nimrod."

"Cause him to be brought here at once," exclaimed Nimrod in great anger.

Abraham was soon brought before Nimrod, who said unto him:

"Are you Abraham, the son of Terah?"

"Yes, O King, I am," answered Abraham.

"Why do you dissuade my servants from worshiping my idols and myself?" cried the king angrily. "Go, Abraham, and worship fire, because fire is the strongest and best god of all."

"I would rather worship water," Abraham spoke fearlessly, "because water extinguishes the fire."

"Let it be as you say," Nimrod returned. "Worship water."

"I will worship the clouds, because they contain the water," continued Abraham.

"Bow down to the clouds then," said Nimrod.

"The sun is stronger and mightier than the clouds, because he can disperse them quickly.

"Worship me then," commanded Nimrod. "Know you not that I have created the whole world, and that I am the true God?"

"Permit your servant to ask one question," Abraham begged.

"Proceed, you have my permission," said the king.

"Who created the sun?" asked Abraham.

"I did," answered the king.

"And who placed him in heaven?"

"Surely I," came from the haughty Nimrod.

"And who causes the sun to rise from the east, and set in the west?"

"None but I," replied the king.

"If you have control of the sun, O Nimrod, make him rise to-morrow in the west, and set in the east," said Abraham. "If you are able to do this I will gladly bow down to you, and

I will admit that you are the true god."

Then the king waxed furious.

"Away with you," he cried, and he ordered that Abraham be put in prison.

At the end of ten days the king caused all the princes and the great men of his kingdom to appear before him.

"What shall be done to Abraham?" asked the king.

"Let him be placed in the hands of fire, which we worship, and we shall see if his God will come down from heaven and save him," was their advice.

Nimrod ordered that a big fire be built at Kasdim for three days and three nights, and in this furnace Abraham was to be burnt.

At the end of three days Abraham was brought to the furnace. All the people of the land, men, women and children, came to see what would be done to the idol breaker. When Abraham was brought forth, the wise men recognized him and said to the king: "O King, this is the man that appeared in the shape of a star, on the day he was born."

At the command of the king, Abraham was stripped of his clothes, his hands and feet tied together and he was thrown into the big fire in the furnace. At that moment the angel Gabriel appeared before God, and said: "O Mighty God, permit me to fly down to the earth, and extinguish the fire in the furnace, and save Abraham, thy beloved."

God said: "There is none like Me in heaven, and there is none like Abraham on earth. Therefore I shall save Abraham Myself. And as for thee," God said, "thou hast intended to do a kind act. I shall therefore permit thee to save three other righteous men from being destroyed by fire."

Justice came before God and, prostrating itself, said: "O Merciful God, spare Abraham, for he is the only man who can do justice. If he is killed, who will care for me?"

Immediately God spoke, saying: "Fire, cool off and bring happiness to My servant Abraham."

No water was needed to quench the fire. The logs burst into bud, the fire in the furnace became grass, and the flames

were turned into beautiful trees, which bore lovely blossoms and fruits. In this beautiful orchard Abraham stayed for three days and three nights, and prayed to God in heaven in these words: "Have pity upon the people who desired to do me evil. Give them a pure heart, and open their eyes, so that they may do what is good and righteous in Thine eyes."

On the third day Nimrod and the princes and his servants, stood around the furnace, and saw Abraham walking through the rows of beautiful trees. "Come out of the furnace," exclaimed the astonished king, "for I shall do you no evil." Abraham went out and presented himself before the king.

"Tell me, O Abraham," said the king, "why fire cannot burn you, and why the flames were turned into a beautiful orchard, the like of which I have never seen?"

"It is because I believe and trust in the God of heaven and earth," answered Abraham. "He saved me from death."

The king and the princes immediately arose and bowed down to Abraham. Abraham said: "Bow not to me, but bow to the God who created heaven and earth, because in His hands are the destinies of all beings." They all then gave Abraham presents of gold, silver and precious stones. Nimrod dismissed him with great honors and gave him two slaves from the royal palace. Ogi was the name of the one, and the name of the other was Eliezer.

About three hundred men came to him and said: "We are your servants. We will go wherever you send us, and we will do whatever you tell us to do."

5. Nimrod's Dream

For two years Abraham and his good wife Sarah dwelt happily in the land of the Chaldees, teaching the people to believe in God and be kind to one another. At the end of two years Nimrod dreamt a dream. In his dream he found himself with his army passing through a certain valley and finally arriving near the furnace into which Abraham was cast. A man, who looked just like Abraham, jumped out of the furnace, and faced Nimrod with a drawn sword. Nimrod tried to escape, but the

man threw an egg at his head, and the egg broke and a great river flowed from it. In that river all the men of the king's army were drowned. The king tried to run away from the river, but suddenly the river changed into an egg again as at first. From that egg a little bird came out and perched on the head of the king, and with its sharp beak pecked out one of his eyes.

Nimrod, on awakening, became greatly alarmed. He at once summoned all his advisers to come and tell him the meaning of his dream. One of the magicians stood up and said: "O King, the interpretation of your dream, may not please you, but alas! it is the true one. The little bird that pecked your eye out, is no other than Abraham, and the river wherein your men were drowned, stands for the generations to come. There will come a time when the children of Abraham will have all your land, and take possession of your country. Know then, O King, that as long as the son of Terah is alive, you and your kingdom shall not stand firm."

The king, on hearing the interpretation of the dream, at once sent some of his servants to kill Abraham. Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, happened to be at the royal court at that time and heard the decree of the king. With great haste he ran to Abraham and said: "Oh, master, escape at once, for a decree has been passed by the king that you be killed forthwith."

Abraham ran to the house of Noah and Shem where he lay in hiding for a whole month. The king's messengers looked for Abraham high and low, but in vain. They came to the king and said: "Abraham is gone, and can not be found."

Terah then visited his son in his hiding place and said: "My son, it is time for us to escape from this city, so that your life may be saved from the hands of Nimrod." And because of his good advice, God rewarded him and prolonged his days, so that he could see Abraham's greatness and glory for thirty-five years more.

Abraham listened to his father's advice, and he, together with his father, his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot, departed for Haran.

6. Abraham's Departure

When God said to Abraham, "Get thee out from the land of thy birth, and from thy father's house so that thy greatness may be known over the whole world," Abraham said: "Oh merciful God, how can I go away, and leave my old father by himself? Who will provide him with food and drink? Who will take care of him? Will not the people talk about me and say: 'Abraham, who teaches others to be good, leaves his old father in Haran without care, and goes away!'" God said: "Go thou, as I have commanded thee, and I will take care of thine old father."

Encouraged by God's promise, Abraham, together with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, set out for the land which God would show him. On his way when the sun was not shining and it was dark, the star of Righteousness shone brightly before him.

Abraham passed through many lands, and as he passed through Mesopotamia and Aromnaharaim, he saw that the people there were idlers. All they were continually engaged in was eating, drinking, and feasting. Abraham, seeing this, said: "Oh merciful God, may it be Thy will that my portion be not in this land where these idle people live."

Abraham then passed through the land of Canaan. There he saw that the inhabitants from young to old were engaged in work, tilling the ground, and reaping its harvest. Abraham rejoiced at this pleasant sight and said: "Merciful God, may it be Thy will that my portion be in this land." God then spoke to him and said: "Unto thy children will I give this land."

Abraham continued his journey through the land of Canaan, and wherever he came he built an altar to God, and induced the people to be kind to one another and worship the true God in heaven.

7. Abraham in Egypt

Scarcely had Abraham settled himself in Canaan, when a famine broke out in the land. He was compelled to leave Canaan and departed for Egypt. On his way from Canaan to

Egypt, Abraham said to his wife: "When the Egyptians will see how beautiful you are, they will kill me, and take you away. I will put you in a casket that no harm befall me because of you." Approaching the Egyptian boundary he put his wife Sarah into a big casket. The king's tax collectors came to Abraham and said: "You must give us one-tenth of whatever you have as taxes to the king." When Abraham consented to the request, they said to him: "What have you in that casket? Perhaps you have barley there, then you must give us one-tenth of it."

"I am ready to give you one-tenth of barley," said Abraham.

The officers said: "Perhaps you have wheat there?"

Abraham replied: "Very well, then, I will give you one-tenth of wheat."

"Perhaps you have pepper there," they said.

"I will give you then one-tenth of pepper," replied Abraham.

The officers, surprised at Abraham's willingness to give one-tenth of whatever they chose, grew suspicious and said: "Who knows, perhaps you have golden shekels there?"

"I am ready to give you whatever you say to me," said Abraham.

"We cannot consent to your offers," said the king's officers at last. "Open the casket and let us examine what it contains."

They forced the casket open, and found Sarah lying there. So astonished were they at her beauty, that they at once took her before the king. Pharaoh was so bewitched by her charms that he gave precious gifts to the officers who had brought her to him. The king asked Sarah who the man was in whose company she had come to Egypt. Upon receiving the reply that he was her brother, the king sent him much gold and silver, sheep and oxen and many slaves. He even gave Sarah his own daughter Hagar as a slave.

Soon Pharaoh, his nobles, and his servants were afflicted with a terrible disease on account of Sarah. Terror-stricken by the plague, he sent for Abraham and said: "Why did you tell me she was your sister, when in truth she is your wife? Now

take your wife and go." After staying two months in Egypt, Abraham returned to Canaan.

8. The Shepherds of Lot

Abraham possessed much cattle and sheep, and so did his nephew Lot. Abraham told his shepherds that they must have their sheep and cattle muzzled, when passing through strange fields, so that they might not pasture in fields not belonging to him.

When Abraham's shepherds saw that the cattle of Lot were pasturing in strange fields, they said to Lot's shepherds: "Why do you do a thing like that?"

Lot's shepherds then replied: "God promised Abraham that to him and to his children He will give the entire country. Abraham has no children to settle in the land. Therefore when he dies, without children, his nephew Lot will be his sole heir, and he and his children will take possession of the land. Lot's cattle are therefore pasturing in fields belonging to their master." God then spoke: "To Abraham's seed will I give this land, but only after the seven nations dwelling in this land shall have been destroyed. To-day it still belongs to those nations."

When Abraham heard about the quarrel, he said to Lot: "My brother, let us not quarrel. You may choose whatever place you prefer. If you go to the right, I will go to the left, and if you choose the left, I will go to the right." Lot thereupon separated himself from Abraham. He chose the cities of Sodom, while Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan.

9. The War of the Kings

Abraham, through his kind deeds and hospitality, became known to all men that lived upon the face of the earth. All the kings grew jealous of Abraham because of his fame and wealth.

One day they held a conference and said: "We must get rid of Abraham, so that all our subjects shall cease talking about his greatness and kindness." One of the kings said: "It is impossible to kill Abraham, for should we try it, all his friends

would come to his aid, and perhaps kill us. It would be best, according to my advice, to make war against the kings of Sodom and take his nephew Lot into captivity. When Abraham comes out to rescue his nephew, we can then dispose of him."

The other kings agreed to his advice, and they waged war upon the five godless kings, Bera, the villain, king of Sodom, Birsha, the sinner, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, the father-hater, king of Admah, Shemeber, the wicked, king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, the city that devours its inhabitants. These five kings were defeated in war and their wives and children were taken prisoners. Lot and his wife and children were also taken into captivity.

Michael, the angel, at once came to Abraham and said: "Thine enemies have defeated the kings of Sodom and the neighboring countries in war, and have captured thy nephew Lot." When Abraham heard this report, he was greatly grieved. He called together his trained servants, gave them gold and silver and said: "Let us go and save the people from the hands of their captors. I charge you not to think of gold and other spoils, but to care only for the safety of men's lives. Try to save my nephew Lot and his family from his captors."

The distance between Abraham and the kings was great, but God performed a wonderful deed. Abraham marched forth with giant strides, each of his steps measuring four miles. Thus Abraham overtook his enemy in a very short time.

When the kings turned around and saw Abraham and his men, they threw their swords and spears at them, but God changed the swords into dust, and the spears into straw. But when Abraham threw back the dust and straw at his enemies, they turned into swords and spears and killed many of them. When the kings saw this, they began to flee for their lives, leaving behind them all the captives and the booty they had taken.

The defeated kings then gathered in the valley of Shove and said to one another: "Let us make Abraham ruler over us, and he shall be our king and god." They cut down cedars,

fashioned a huge throne and waited for Abraham to come there.

When Abraham arrived, they bowed down before him, made him sit on the throne which they had made, and they all exclaimed: "You are our prince! You are our king! You are our god!"

Abraham saw their exultation and said: "God forbid that I shall be your king, or your god. I am but a man, just like any one of you. If you do desire to give me any reward, the only reward you can give me is, that you love one another, live together in peace, and open wide the doors of your houses for the needy, the suffering, and the wayfarer. Pray to the God that created heaven and earth, and serve Him with all your heart. For it is not with the power of my hands that I have succeeded in this battle. It is God in heaven that was my shield."

When Abraham had uttered these words, the sweet voices of angels were heard in heaven chanting this prayer to God: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the shield of Abraham."

10. The Visit of the Angels

Abraham made a tent, with doors opening on all sides, so that the wayfarer might enter it by whichever way he came, and eat of his bread.

One day Abraham was very sick and was unable to wait upon strangers. God had therefore taken out the sun from its sheath, and made the day so hot that no one was able to go out of the house. "My servant Abraham is sick," said God, "let no stranger enter his house and disturb him."

When Abraham saw that there was no one entering his house, he was greatly vexed. He called his servant Eliezer to him, and said: "I am sick and unable to go out of my house. Go outside, look around and see if you cannot find any wayfarers. If you see anyone pass by, ask him to come to the house of Abraham, where he may rest from his wearisome journey, and refresh himself."

Eliezer bowed and departed to comply with his master's request. He looked in every direction and seeing no one pass by, he returned to his master and said: "Master, I saw no one pass by."

Abraham was greatly worried and said to himself: "Who knows, perhaps Eliezer has not fulfilled my request with all his heart? I will go out myself, and see whether in truth there is no one passing by to-day."

Abraham, in spite of his illness and the scorching heat, then went outside and looked east, north, west, and south, and when he saw nobody passing, he was greatly grieved. He said to himself: "Perhaps there are some wayfarers traveling in the desert who are tortured by the scorching sun."

When God saw the anxiety of his servant Abraham, He sent down to him three angels in the form of human beings. They were the angels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Raphael was sent down to cure Abraham of his sickness, Michael was to bring Sarah the glad news that by next year a son would be born to her, and Gabriel was to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

While Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, watching for some strangers to pass by, he saw the three angels in human form approaching. He quickly ran to meet them. When he saw that the three men spoke kindly to one another he said to himself: "Surely, God has caused three good men to come to my house to-day." He bowed to them, and said: "If I found favor in your eyes, do not pass away from your servant, but stay with me until your hearts are refreshed."

Abraham gave the men water to wash their feet, which were covered with dust and dirt from their long journey (for he thought they were Arabs who worshiped the dust on their feet), and then asked them to sit under a tree in the garden. He gave them bread, and hastening to his wife Sarah, asked her to prepare cakes. On account of his great joy over his

guests, Abraham forgot his suffering and ran unto the flock, to fetch cattle for meat.

He approached a calf, and the calf seeing Abraham, ran away from him. Abraham followed the calf until it reached a certain cave. The calf entered the cave and hid there. Abraham followed the calf, and on entering the cave, he saw Adam and Eve lying dead on their beds; but it looked as though they were sleeping peacefully. He saw many lights that were shining brightly all over the cave, and he scented fragrant odors, resembling the odors that came from the Garden of Eden. Abraham said to himself: "When I am about to die I shall buy this cave, and I shall pay whatever amount they ask for it."

Abraham took the calf, brought it home, and gave it to his son Ishmael, to prepare savory meat for the guests. "Let the boy get accustomed," said Abraham to himself, "to serve wayfarers, and deal kindly with them." When God saw the generous acts of Abraham He said: "If the angels that came to Abraham's house do not eat and do not drink, Abraham will feel greatly worried. I will therefore open the mouths of the angels, like those of men, so that Abraham may rejoice." The angels then ate and drank, and Abraham stood beneath the tree watching them, ready to serve them.

God then said to Abraham: "Because thou didst give water to the strangers, and shelter in the shadow of the trees, and because thou didst give them bread, meat, butter and milk, and didst stand by them ready to serve them, therefore will I grant these things to thy children: When they shall wander in the wilderness, and have no water to drink, a fountain of water shall follow them. When they shall be traveling, and be scorched by the hot rays of the sun, I shall put a cloud above them to shelter them from the heat. When they shall be far away from an inhabited land and suffer hunger, I shall cause manna to come down for them from heaven, and thus give them food. When they shall come to the promised land, they will find fountains and streams; their sheep and cattle shall increase, and their houses shall be full of good things."

When the angels had finished their meal, one of them said: "Know thou, Abraham, that by next year thy wife Sarah shall bear a son unto thee." The three most welcome guests were ready to depart and Abraham accompanied them on the way.

CHAPTER X

THE CITIES OF SIN

1. Their Laws and Judges



THE men of Sodom, Gomorrah and the three other cities of the plain were very rich, because their land was fertile, and in it was found all the treasures of silver, gold, and precious stones. When a Sodomite told his servant to go into the garden and bring him some vegetables, they would dig up the ground and find gold.

When the Sodomites grew extremely rich, they became very wicked, forgot the true God in heaven, and instead worshiped the sun, moon, and stars. They passed a law not to permit any poor man to enter the city, for fear that their wealth might be diminished. Furthermore, they were even envious of the little birds that came to eat from their trees. So they cut down all the trees and said: "Let no living thing enjoy the fruit of our trees."

They appointed several wicked men as judges and officers over them, and if any stranger happened to come there, they robbed him of everything he had. These wicked people passed a law, that any man or woman who was caught giving alms to the poor should be put to death.

The Sodomites appointed four judges over them, whose names were, Liar, Deceiver, Falsifier, and Perverter of Justice. And these were the laws they passed: Everyone in the city had to pasture the cattle of the city. If he was a rich man, and had cattle of his own, he had to pasture the cattle of the city for one day only; but if he was a poor man, and had no cattle of his own, he had to mind the cattle for two days. If a man crossed the river by way of the bridge or ford, he had to

pay four zuzim to the city, but if he waded through the water, he had to pay eight zuzim. If a man cut the ear of his neighbor's donkey, the donkey must stay in his house, until his ear healed. If a man hit another, and caused him to bleed, the one that was hit had to pay his assailant for having performed the operation of cupping, which was considered a cure. If a man made a feast and invited a stranger to come to it, they punished him by taking away all the clothes he had.

One day officers came to a poor orphan, and said to him, "Lo, you are a poor boy, and possess nothing, therefore you must pasture the cattle of the city for two days." The boy took the cattle to pasture, then he took a knife, and killed all the cattle.

When the people of Sodom became aware of that, they came running to the field. The boy said to them: "He who is rich and possesses an ox, shall take but one skin, and he who is poor and has no ox, shall take two skins." The men were very angry, and said: "Is it not enough that you have killed our cattle, but you must take the skins and give them to the poor?" The orphan said: "I did the same as you did. For he who had no ox had to pasture two days, therefore let him have two skins, and he who had an ox and had to pasture only one day, let him have but one skin." The Sodomites were ashamed of their own decision, and went away.

Once a strange man happened to come to Sodom. The Sodomites caught him and said: "Come on, pay four zuzim for crossing the bridge. The stranger said: "I did not cross the bridge, but I simply waded through the water."

"Oh, if that is the case," they said, "you must pay eight zuzim to the city." On refusing to pay, the Sodomites hit him so hard, that he bled. They brought him to the judges and told them what had happened. The judges heard their complaint and exclaimed: "Oh, you rascal, you must pay at once the eight zuzim for crossing the river on foot, and you must also pay these people for their hard labor in making you bleed."

One day Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, happened to come to Sodom. He saw one of the people trying to rob a stranger,

and he said to the robber, "Go away, and leave this man alone." Seeing that the robber refused to do so, Eliezer seized him and pulled him away by force. The robber grew angry at Eliezer, picked up a stone, and threw it at his head, making him bleed. When the Sodomite saw Eliezer bleed, he danced for joy and shouted: "Now you must pay me a big sum of money for performing the operation of cupping!"

"You are insane," Eliezer said: "you have struck me and for that you wish to be paid?"

The Sodomite said: "Surely you are a stranger here, and you are not acquainted with the laws of the land. You must come with me to the judge."

They went to the judge, and upon hearing the story of the Sodomite, the judge said to Eliezer: "You must pay without delay the money to this man, because he made you bleed." Eliezer grew very angry, picked up a stone and hit the judge so forcibly on the head that he made him bleed. "Now," said Eliezer to the judge, "whatever you owe me for cupping, pay to this man!"

2. Torturing Strangers

As the people of Sodom permitted no one to enter their house to lodge, they set up beds in the middle of the street, some of which were very long and others short. When a stranger came, three men seized him by the head and three by his feet, and they forced him upon one of the beds. If he was a tall man, they made him lie down in a short bed. And seeing his feet overlapping the bed, the six men would try to jam him in with all their strength until the victim was on the point of dying. If he was a short man they made him lie down in the long bed. Then the six men began pulling and wrenching his limbs with all their might until he filled it out. The outcries of the victims were answered with the words: "Thus will we deal with any man that comes into our land."

Once Eliezer came there and they asked him to lie down in one of those beds at night. But Eliezer refused and said: "Since my mother died, I have never slept in a bed at night." When the

people of Sodom heard this they withdrew their request and let him alone.

3. A Sodomite's Hospitality

One evening a stranger came to Sodom from a very distant country, called Elam. With him he had a donkey, a very beautiful cover and an extremely long rope. He sat down in the middle of the street and no one would give him shelter for the night. A certain sly man, whose name was Hedor, passed by, and, seeing the stranger in the middle of the street, said to him: "Enter my house and there you will find repose as you please." The stranger thanked Hedor and went with him. Hedor took the cover and the rope into the house and the donkey he led into the stable.

In the morning the stranger said: "Now it is time for me to depart." Hedor said: "Don't you wish to have breakfast here and then go?" The stranger consented, and after having eaten his meal, he said to his host: "May the Lord bless you, because you have done this kindness to me, for you have taken me into your house and have given me food and drink."

When the stranger was about to depart, Hedor said: "Oh, how can you travel now, when the sun is burning so hot that it is impossible to go outside. Stay with me until the sun has set." Hedor urged the stranger, and he stayed with him until evening. When evening came, Hedor said to the stranger: "Lo, it is extremely dark outside, if you go now, you may go astray and harm may befall you. Be pleased to stay with us this night, too."

The next morning the stranger awoke early to depart and he went to feed his donkey. Hedor then approached him and said: "Stay with us until after breakfast." But the stranger said that he could not stay any longer, and that he must depart immediately.

Hedor's wife then approached him and said: "This stranger has been in our house for two days, and he has partaken of our food; and now he is going away from us, and may never return again." Hedor said to his wife: "You just keep still and I shall

devise a plan to make him pay for whatever he has eaten and drunk."

When they got through speaking, the stranger came into the house to get the cover and the rope, which he had given to the host on his arrival.

"Oh," said Hedor, "you must have dreamt a dream and saw a cover and a rope. I will give you the interpretation of your dream. The long rope signifies that you will have long life, as long as a rope. The beautiful cover of many colors indicates a beautiful garden. God wishes to show you in a dream that in days to come you will possess an extremely beautiful garden, in which you will plant all kinds of fruit trees and your days will be prolonged."

"Why do you speak to me thus?" said the stranger. "I had no dream, but when I was fully awake I gave you a beautiful cover and a rope."

"Now that I have given you the interpretation of your dream you will have to pay me three pieces of silver for it."

The stranger and Hedor then went before the court, and Hedor complained: "This man had a dream about a rope and a cover, and I gave him the interpretation, but he refused to pay me." The judge then ordered that the stranger must pay Hedor for his services. The stranger, who questioned the justice of the judge, was ordered to be thrown out of the court-house. Hedor then cursed the stranger, insulted him, and the inhabitants threw him out of the town.

4. Two Girls Burnt Alive

One day two girls came down to the well to draw water. One girl said to the other: "Tell me why do you look so bad to-day?"

"We have no bread in the house," the girl answered, "and we have not tasted any food for the past two days."

"Stay here, my friend, until I return," she said. The girl hastily ran home, filled her pitcher with flour, and on returning, said to her friend: "Here, let us exchange pitchers, you give me yours, and I shall give you my pitcher full of flour."

When this kind act became known to the people of Sodom, she was tried, found guilty and burned alive.

Pletis, the daughter of Lot, once found a poor old man in the street who was dying from hunger and thirst. She went home, filled her pitcher with all kinds of food, and brought it to the old man. Every day after that she used to put some food into her pitcher, pass by the old man, and give it to him.

The Sodomites were surprised and said to one another: "What does this poor old man live on? So many days have passed in which no food nor drink was given him and he is still alive. By this time he should have died from thirst and hunger."

Some time had passed before they found out that it was Pletis who provided him with food. They brought her to court and tried her before the judges of the town. The judges ordered that she be taken out of the city and burned alive, for being generous to the poor man.

5. The Cup of Iniquity Filled

One day a wayfarer came into Sodom and sat down in one of the streets of the city. A certain girl saw him there in the middle of the night and said to him: "Where do you come from and where are you going?"

"I come from a very distant city," he said, "and when I came to Sodom the sun had set. I came here to stay over night. Early in the morning I shall continue my journey. Lo, dear maiden," he pleaded, "give me some water, because my tongue is parched from the heat. Have pity on me."

The girl, moved by the old man's plea, went home and fetched some bread and water. After the man had finished eating and drinking, he thanked the girl in the name of God. When the judges of the city became aware of this act, they put her to trial. The judges ordered that she be put to death. The people smeared her body with honey from head to toe and placed her near the bee-hives. The bees stung her to death. She uttered one shrill cry which went up to heaven and reached Almighty God. Thereupon God spoke to the angels, saying: "This cry

moves Me to action. Descend and put an end to the evil deeds of the Sodomites."

God then informed Abraham that he was about to destroy Sodom and the other cities of the plain. Abraham, like a loving father, prayed that God might forgive the people this time, in order that they might improve in the future. God, however, would not listen to the prayer of Abraham, and said: "The girl's wrong has filled the cup of their iniquity and I must punish them for their sins. If, however, I find ten good people among them, I will spare all the cities for their sake." The angels that were at Abraham's house, seeing that God did not accept his prayer, immediately left his house and went to the city of Sodom, for they knew that there were not even ten good people in the sinful cities.

6. Lot and His Wife

The judges of Sodom appointed Lot to be their chief judge. While he was sitting at the gate of the city acting as judge, he saw two angels in human form. At that moment he thought of his uncle Abraham, who had always received strangers with great joy and kindness. He rose to meet them, bowed to them and said: "Pray, my masters, come to my house, and there you will find rest." "No," said the angels, "we shall sleep in the street." But Lot insisted and the angels followed him to his house. Lot feared the wrath of the people of Sodom. He gave the angels no water to wash their feet with. "For," he thought, "if the people of Sodom on the following morning see the dust on the feet of these men, they will think that they have just now arrived, and will not suspect me of having been hospitable."

When Edith, Lot's wife, saw him coming in with two strangers, she was greatly displeased. But Lot ordered her to prepare supper for the two strangers. Finding that she had no salt in the house, she went to a neighbor and said: "Pray lend me some salt, for my husband all of a sudden has become hospitable. Two strangers have just now arrived at our house, and my husband was very glad to meet them. Now he insists that I prepare a rich feast for them, and I am short of salt."

The presence of the strangers soon became known to the people of Sodom and they crowded around the house of Lot. All the people came, not one missed, both young and old, big and small. When the Sodomites tried to break the door open, they were smitten with blindness, and they failed to find the door.

"Now," said the angels to Lot early in the morning, "bring out everything you have from this city, for God is going to destroy all the cities of the plain."

Lot was terrified by their words, and he went at once to his sons-in-law and said to them: "Hasten, depart from this place, for God has sent angels to destroy the city." "Oh, you must be out of your senses," they laughed. "You fool! The whole city is merry and rejoicing; harps, flutes and cymbals resound, and you say Sodom will be destroyed!"

Lot then ran to get his money back from the people to whom he had lent it on usury, but the angels hurried him and made him return quickly to his house. He began to gather all his precious stones, gold and silver. Being thus delayed, the angel Michael took hold of the hand of Lot, and of his wife and his daughters, and took them out of the city. "Do not look behind you, and do not stop in the entire plain," ordered the angels. "Escape towards the mountain, lest you die." At the same time the rain that was streaming down upon the cities was changed to brimstone. Lot's wife did not heed the order of the angels, and turned to look at Sodom, and she was turned into a pillar of salt. This pillar is still standing by the brook Kedrion. Every day cattle gather around it and lick it up, and in the evening it seems that there is nothing left of it, but when morning comes it stands there as large as ever.

When the rumor spread in the sinful cities that death was near, they that worshiped the sun exclaimed: "Oh, would that morning had come, so the sun whom we worship might deliver us from this calamity." They that worshiped the moon said: "Oh, would that morning never came, so that the moon might deliver us from this trouble." God heard the blasphemy of the people of Sodom and caused fire and brimstone to rain down from heaven, at the very moment when both sun and moon were

in the skies. The angel Gabriel, who was sent to destroy Sodom, put forth his little finger and touched the rock upon which were built the five cities of the plain, and overturned them, thus destroying everything that was found in them.

CHAPTER XI

ISAAC

1. The Feast and Satan



YEAR had passed and a son was born to Abraham by his good wife Sarah, whom he named Isaac. Many kings and princes gathered in the house of Abraham to celebrate the event, and among the guests was also the giant Og, the king of Bashan.

When Isaac was weaned, Abraham again made a great feast. At this feast all the great men of the land came to express their good wishes to Abraham and his wife Sarah. When Satan saw the joy of Abraham, he appeared at the house of Abraham in the guise of a beggar. He stood at the door of Abraham's house, asking for alms or a meal. Abraham was so busy with the feast and with waiting upon the guests, that he did not notice the poor man standing at the door, and as a result did not call him into the house to partake of the food.

"Oh, how happy I am that this thing has happened," said Satan. "Now it is time for me to fly to heaven." He then presented himself before God and said: "O God, now that Thou hast fulfilled all the wishes and desires of Abraham's heart, he has ceased pitying the poor. To-day I tried him out. I stood like a poor man at the door of his house, and he did not even take notice of me, neither did he call me to eat bread. And what is more," said Satan, "of all the cattle he slaughtered for the feast he did not care to spare even one little lamb to bring an offering to Thee, Almighty God."

"There is none in the whole world as God-fearing and kind-hearted as Abraham," said God. "Over whom rejoices Abraham,

if not for Isaac. Yet should I tell him to bring his only child as a sacrifice to Me he would do so."

2. Ishmael

Ishmael's actions were very bad, and Sarah, like a good mother, tried to teach him to be good. She said to him, "My son, pray try to improve, so that you may be loved by both God and man." Seeing that Ishmael did not heed her words, she said to herself: "Let me keep watch on my son Isaac, lest he get used to the evil of Ishmael and be as bad as he is."

One day Sarah saw Ishmael bring an idol and play with it in the presence of Isaac. Sarah rebuked him and said: "Don't do a thing like that any more in our house because you will be punished." Ishmael, fearing Sarah, took the idol and hid it in a secret place outside of the house.

At another time Ishmael said to Isaac: "My brother, let us go to the field to play." When they came to the field, Ishmael took arrows and aimed them at Isaac.

"Why do you do that?" asked Isaac.

"Oh, don't you see that I am simply jesting with you, Isaac."

But Ishmael really did this purposely, "because," thought he, "I will slay my brother Isaac, and I will inherit all the wealth from my father." When this thing became known to Sarah, she begged Ishmael to improve, but Ishmael was always looking for a chance to kill his brother Isaac. Sarah was then greatly alarmed by the acts of Ishmael, and she said to Abraham: "Pray drive Ishmael out of the house because he intends to kill Isaac, our son."

"How can I do a thing like that?" said Abraham.

"Whatever thy wife Sarah tells thee, listen to her," the voice of God replied.

Abraham then gave his wife Hagar bread and a bottle full of water, and put Ishmael on her shoulders. Hagar, together with her son Ishmael, walked towards the wilderness. On their lonesome journey she began to look around for her idols, to bow to them and pray to them. Suddenly the water in the bottle disappeared, and she had no water to give to Ishmael who was

very thirsty on account of the great fever he had. Ishmael cried loud and bitterly, because he was dying from thirst. His mother cast him under willow shrubs and she sat down at a distance. "For," said she, "let me not see my child die from thirst." Ishmael then prayed to God, and He listened to his prayer, and was about to make a spring of water come out for him, at the place where he was.

"O Merciful God!" exclaimed the angels, who surrounded Him, "why wouldst Thou have mercy upon Ishmael, and save him from sure death? Surely, it is known to Thee, that, in future times, his children will cause the children of Israel to perish from thirst, when they shall be exiled from their land."

"Tell me," said God, "what is Ishmael now, righteous or wicked?"

"Ishmael is yet righteous," said they, "for he is yet unable to distinguish between good and evil."

"Know you, therefore, that I do not judge men by the acts that they will do in the future, but by the acts they are doing at the present moment."

CHAPTER XII

PIETY OF ABRAHAM

1. Hospitality



IN those days Abraham built on all high ways inns for wayfarers. In those inns he placed all kinds of food and plenty of water. If any wayfarer was tired and weary from his journey, if he was hungry or thirsty, he entered one of those inns and there he found tables heaped with all kinds of food and drink, and beds upon which to lie down. Then the wayfarer would thank the God of Abraham and bless His name.

In Beersheba, Abraham built a very large house, and in it he placed four doors, on its four sides. "For," said he, "let no way-farer have to look for the door, let him be able to enter my house, whichever way he comes." Around the house he planted a beautiful orchard. At the entrance there was a wonderful tree the like of which never was, and never will be. If a righteous man, who believed in God, approached Abraham's house the tree spread its branches out, and with its leaves would cover the man to hide him from the scorching heat of the sun. But if a man who worshiped idols approached it, the tree folded up its branches and cast no shade, thus refusing shelter to the idol-worshiper. When Abraham saw a man approach him for whom the tree would fold its branches, he nevertheless hastened to receive him kindly, serve him with all kinds of food, and say to him: "Eat and drink as much as you desire." And Abraham attended him in person, and sat down with him and explained him all about the great doings of God in heaven, and talked to him so much about the wonderful things of God, that the stranger at last acknowledged the true God in heaven. When-

ever the people wanted to thank Abraham for his kindness, he said to them: "Don't thank me, but thank God in heaven, He is the one who does these great deeds. He is the only one in heaven and on earth." "Pray, teach us how to thank Him," they said to him. Abraham joyfully replied: "My good people, say: 'Blessed be the Lord, forever and ever.'"

Abraham became so widely known that people from all the corners of the world came to him. He received them with great joy and love. Sarah provided new clothes for all those who came with torn ones, and she busied herself with the visitors day and night. In the day time she helped her husband serve them food. In the night time, when the visitors went to sleep, she stayed up and sewed dresses for the poor women and their children. Thus her light was never quenched, from Friday eve to Friday eve. When God saw her great kindness and love for the poor, He surrounded her house with beautiful clouds, and this became the wonder of the whole world.

2. Tolerance

One evening as Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent, he saw an old man, tired and weary, approach. Abraham ran to meet him and said: "Pray, my lord, do not pass the door of thy servant Abraham, but lodge here tonight. In the morning you will continue your way."

"No, here in the open I will lodge," answered the old man. But Abraham insisted and the old man entered his tent. After the old man had eaten his meal, Abraham said to him: "Now praise the the bountiful God in heaven who gives food to all." "I do not know who your God is," said the old man. "I will praise no other god except the one that my own fingers have made." Oh," said Abraham, "the gods which your own fingers have made are helpless, and they cannot even see themselves. The true God who has made heaven and earth, is in heaven, and to Him we have to give thanks for His daily kindness."

"What have I done to you that you want to keep me from worshiping my own God? Leave me alone, for I will not listen

to you." Abraham grew very angry at the stubbornness of the old man, and said: "Get out of my house at once!" In the dead dark of night in the wilderness, the old man walked, aimlessly and without protection from the wild animals.

"Where is the man that came to thee tonight?" asked God of Abraham. "Oh, that man was very obstinate and he refused to listen to me. I begged him to believe in Thee, and he did not heed my words. He said that he would believe in no other God than the one that his own fingers had made. I therefore grew angry and drove him out of the house." "Dost thou know what thou hast done?" asked God. "Art thou aware that I have suffered this old man for many years, even though he denies Me? I have been kind and merciful to him, I have provided him with food, and with all the other necessities of life. And when he came to thee, and asked thee for shelter, thou gavest him but one meal, and in thine anger thou drovest him out of thy house." "Oh, pray forgive my wrong doing," begged Abraham. "No, I will not forgive thee, unless thou wilt go and beg the old man to return to thy house, and if he will forgive thee, I shall forgive thee, but not otherwise."

Abraham immediately ran to the wilderness, looked for the old man, and when he found him, he fell on his knees and spoke thus: "Pray forgive me for what I did to you tonight, for I know that I was wrong." The old man listened to Abraham's prayer and said: "Yes, I forgive you, Abraham." But Abraham did not leave him alone. He insisted that the old man return to his house and stay over night. He gave him food and drink and he provided him with food for his journey. "Because thou hast done this kind thing," said God to Abraham, "I will always remember my covenant with thee and thy offspring. When they will do evil, I will chastise them, but my anger against them will not last forever; I will remember My covenant with thee and I will forgive them."

3. The Two Wives of Ishmael

The wife of Ishmael bore to him four sons and a daughter, and afterward Ishmael, together with his mother, his wife and children went to the wilderness. There they built tents and they kept on encamping and journeying, month after month, and year after year. God gave Ishmael flocks and herds and tents, because of his father Abraham.

One day Abraham said to Sarah: "It is now three years since my son Ishmael left our house and went to live in the wilderness. Pray let me go to see him and find out how he is getting along."

"Do as you desire," answered Sarah.

Abraham rode upon one of his camels to the wilderness to seek his son Ishmael. When Abraham reached the tent of Ishmael, he found Ishmael's wife sitting at the entrance of the tent with her children. "God be with you," said Abraham to her, but there was no reply. "Where is your husband Ishmael?" he inquired.

"He and his mother went to the wilderness to bring apples, pomegranates and figs."

"Pray, my daughter," said Abraham, "let me have a little water, because I am very thirsty from my long journey."

"I have neither bread nor water," answered Ishmael's wife.

"When your husband returns," said Abraham to her, "tell him an old man from the land of Canaan was here, and asked for his welfare, and he said that the pin of his tent is very bad; remove it and place another one in its stead." Then Abraham departed homeward. When Ishmael returned to his tent, his wife told him what had happened. He at once understood that the old man was his father Abraham, and that the pin meant his bad wife. He therefore divorced her and married another woman.

Three years passed and Abraham once more rode upon his camel to the wilderness to seek his son Ishmael and to see how he was getting along. As soon as Abraham came near the tent of Ishmael, a woman, who was Ishmael's wife, came out to meet him, and said: "God be with you, old man."

"Where is your husband, my daughter?" inquired Abraham.

"He went into the forest," she replied, "to hunt some game."

"Pray let me have some water, because I am very thirsty," said Abraham.

The woman immediately ran into the tent and brought out some bread and water and gave it to the old man. When he was finished eating and drinking, he prayed to God and said: "O Merciful God, send Thy blessing to the house of my son." And he turned to Ishmael's wife and said: "When your husband returns, tell him that a very old man from the land of Canaan was here and asked for his welfare. He also said that the new pin which he put into his tent is a great honor to him, and that he should never remove it from its place." When Ishmael returned home, and his wife told him what had happened, he said: This old man is my beloved father Abraham. May God bless him and prolong his life, for he still cherishes and loves his son."

Ishmael then took his wife and his children and journeyed thence, and came to his father in the land of the Philistines. In that land Abraham and Ishmael dwelt for a long time.

CHAPTER XIII

ABRAHAM'S TEMPTATION

1. God's Command



ONE day the angels came to present themselves before God, and Satan was among them.

"Whence comest thou?" inquired God of Satan.

"From my wanderings up and down the earth," answered Satan.

"And what hast thou to say concerning my faithful servant Abraham?" asked God.

Satan now saw a chance of repeating his charge against Abraham, and said: "Abraham remembered Thee and served Thee only when he required something from Thee, and now he has forsaken Thee. When he had no children he served Thee and erected altars to Thee wherever he came, and he proclaimed Thy name continually to all the children of the earth. But now that Thou hast given him whatever he has desired, hast made his name great and a blessing in the mouth of all the people that inhabit the earth, and hast even given him a son in his old age, he has forgotten Thee. On the day his son was born, and also on the day he was weaned, he made a great feast for all the inhabitants in the land and he did not offer to Thee as much as a turtle-dove or a pigeon."

"There is none so just, righteous, and true to Me as My servant Abraham," said God. "And were I even to ask him to sacrifice his only son Isaac to Me as a burnt offering, he would not withhold him from Me."

"Speak now to Abraham as Thou hast said," said Satan, "and Thou wilt see whether he will disregard Thy words."

God decided to try Abraham and Isaac, and He said to Abraham, "Take now thy son."

"I have two sons," said Abraham, "and I don't know which one to take."

"Take thy only son," said God.

"The one is the only son of his mother, and the other is the only son of his mother," said Abraham.

"Take then the son that thou lovest," said God.

"I love both of them," said Abraham.

"Take thy son, Isaac," said God, "and offer him to Me as a burnt offering, on one of the mountains which I will show thee."

"What shall I do?" thought Abraham to himself. "How shall I separate Isaac from his mother Sarah. If I tell her of what God has told me, she will die of great anxiety and sorrow. If I take him away stealthily from her, so that she may not know whither he is gone, she may kill herself. The only thing left me to do is to devise a plan how to take Isaac away from the house with her consent."

"Go to the market place," Abraham said to Sarah, on the following morning, "and buy the best food and drink you can get, for we have a holiday to-day."

"What holiday is there to-day," inquired Sarah, "that you tell us to be merry and joyful?"

"Why should we not rejoice," said Abraham, "when God was very kind to us, and gave us a son in our old age?"

"In the middle of the feast, Abraham said to his wife, Sarah: "Do you know that Isaac has already reached the age of thirty-seven? When I was only three years old I already acknowledged the existence of the God in heaven, and our son Isaac is grown up and has not yet learned to know God. I know of a certain place where lads are taught to know God. Let me take Isaac there so that he may learn to fear the Almighty God, and to be kind to all his fellow-men."

"Very well," said Sarah, "take him to the place of which you have spoken, but pray take good care of him on the way, for I have no other son nor daughter but him. Oh, neglect him not, my husband. If he be hungry, give him bread, and if he be thirsty, give water to drink; do not let him go on foot; speak

kindly to him, shield him from the hot rays of the sun, and be kind unto him and do not get angry at him." Sarah then chose a very fine garment and a beautiful turban for her son Isaac. On the top of the turban she fastened a precious stone. She also prepared provisions for the road. She wept bitterly and said: "Who knows if I shall ever see my son Isaac again?"

"I shall follow your wishes faithfully," said Abraham.

Early in the morning Sarah fell asleep and Abraham, seizing this chance, took with him two of his young men, Ishmael and Eliezer, chopped wood for the burnt offering, and they all set out for the place of which God had spoken to him.

2. Satan Interferes

When Abraham and Isaac had travelled for some distance, Sarah awoke from her sleep, Satan came and said to her "Where is thy husband?"

"My husband went on some journey," answered Sarah.

"And where is thy beloved son Isaac?" asked Satan.

"My son Isaac went with Abraham to a certain place to learn the law of God," replied Sarah.

"Why didst thou let him go there?" asked Satan, "for thou shalt never see him again."

"No harm can befall anyone unless God wills it," said Sarah.

Enraged by Sarah's answer, Satan went and appeared to Abraham in the figure of a very old man, and said to him: "Where art thou going? Art thou mad? God gave thee a son in thine old age, and now thou art going to kill him. Hast thou lost thy senses?"

"I must do what God bids me, and I will do it gladly," answered Abraham.

Disappointed by this answer, Satan returned and appeared to Isaac in the figure of a young man.

"Tell me, lovely boy, whither art thou going?" asked Satan.

"I am going to learn the law of God," answered Isaac.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Satan, "when art thou going to learn the law of God, during thy lifetime or after thy death? Dost

thou know that thy foolish old father is leading thee to slaughter?"

"Father," exclaimed Isaac, "what does this bad man want from me?"

"Do not listen to him," said Abraham.

Disappointed once more, Satan passed on before Abraham and transformed himself into a large river in the road. When Abraham and his son Isaac came to the river, and found neither bridge nor ford, they entered the river. But the farther they went, the deeper grew the river, so that the water reached up to their necks. Abraham recognized the place and knew that there had been no water there before. He lifted his hands toward heaven and said: "O Lord, it was Thy wish that Thy name be sanctified through me, and now if either my son or I will be drowned in this river, whereby will Thy name be sanctified?"

"By my name do I swear," answered a holy voice from heaven, "that thou and thy son Isaac shall sanctify My name." God then rebuked Satan, and the river suddenly disappeared and the place became dry land again.

3. The Sacrifice

On the third day of his journey, Abraham raised his eyes and saw at a distance the place of which God had told him. He noticed a large valley in front of him, surrounded by many hills. Suddenly the hills moved from their places, gathered in one place, and formed one big mountain. He also noticed a pillar of fire on the top of the mountain which reached to heaven, and the entire mountain was wrapped in a beautiful cloud.

"What can you see there, my son?" asked Abraham of Isaac.

"I see a pillar of fire and a cloud on the top of the mountain," answered Isaac.

"Do you see anything there?" asked Abraham of Ishmael and Eliezer.

"Where?" said they in surprise; "we see nothing there but hills and valleys."

"Then," said Abraham to his servants, "stay here with the donkey, and my son and I shall go to that place yonder, worship God, and then return to you."

While they were walking along, Isaac said to his father: "I see the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb to be sacrificed as a burnt offering?"

"God will provide Himself with a burnt offering, my son," answered the aged father.

Abraham and Isaac reached the place which they had seen from a distance, and Abraham began to build an altar on the top of the mountain, while Isaac handed him stones and mortar. Abraham took some wood and arranged it upon the altar. He then bound his son Isaac and placed him upon the wood.

"Pray, father," implored Isaac, "don't inform my mother about my death, while she is standing on the roof, lest she throw herself down in her despair. Do not inform my mother about my death while she is passing a well, lest she throw herself into it. Burn me into fine ashes, gather them in a casket and place it in my mother's chamber. At all hours, whenever she enters the chamber, she will remember her son Isaac and weep for him."

"And, my father," continued Isaac, "what will you and my mother do in your old age? Who will comfort you in time of grief?"

"We can survive you by a few days only," answered Abraham; "and He who was our Comfort before you were born, will comfort us henceforth."

Abraham then rolled up his garments, leaned his knees upon Isaac with all his strength, took a knife and stretched out his hand to slaughter his son. And God sitting upon His throne, saw how the father was ready to slaughter his only son and how the son was willing to be slaughtered. Tears were rolling down from the eyes of Abraham upon Isaac, and from Isaac down upon the wood. At that moment the heavens were opened and the angels broke out in loud weeping. Their tears fell upon Abraham's knife, and three drops fell into Isaac's eyes.

"Stay thy hand," called a voice from heaven unto Abraham.

"Who art thou?" exclaimed Abraham.

"I am the angel Michael sent down by the Lord of Hosts," answered the voice.

"I shall not depart from this place, unless God himself will tell me to stay my hand, for it was He who ordered me to do so."

"Do not touch the boy," called a voice from heaven, "for now I know that thou fearest Me."

When Abraham turned around he saw a ram, with its horns entangled in a thicket. This ram was created in the twilight of the first Sabbath Eve when God rested from His labors. It fed in the Garden of Eden under the Tree of Life, and it drank from the water of the garden, which waters the whole earth.

Abraham took his son Isaac off the altar and untied his hands. Hereupon God opened the heavens and Abraham heard these words: "By myself I swear, because thou didst not withhold thy son from Me, I will bless thee and multiply thy children like the stars in heaven."

"Thou swearest," said Abraham, "and I also swear, I will not leave this altar until I have said what I have to say."

"Speak whatsoever thou desirest," said God.

"When Thou hast commanded me to sacrifice my son Isaac," said Abraham, "I might have said, 'O Lord, yesterday Thou didst tell me, in Isaac shall Thy seed be called,' and now Thou sayest, 'Take thy son, thy only son, even Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering.' But I said nothing. I was ready and willing to offer my son as a burnt offering, although he is dearer to me than my own life. I pray to Thee, O Merciful God, that when my children in generations to come, will arouse Thine anger by sinning against Thee, Thou shalt forgive them, and deliver them from their suffering."

"I know," said God, "that thy children in generations to come will sin against Me, and I shall sit in judgment upon them on New Year's day. If they desire that I should grant them pardon, they shall blow the ram's horn on that day, and I, mindful of the ram that was substituted for Isaac as a sacrifice, will forgive them for their sins."

Abraham then took the ram, put it on the altar, and offered it as a burnt offering instead of his son Isaac. The fire did not consume the entire ram, for the following parts were left: ten blood-vessels, its skins, and its two horns. The blood-vessels were used by King David as strings for the wonderful harp which he played. The skin was worn by Elijah, the prophet, as a girdle

for himself. The left horn was kept for the day when God shall sound it on the mountain of Sinai, where He will give the Children of Israel the Ten Commandments. The right horn is hidden to this day. When God shall restore the people of Israel to their own country, Elijah, the prophet, will take this horn, and with it sound a very strong blast which will be heard from one end of the earth to the poor. The Children of Israel, hearing this call, will return from all corners of the earth to the land of their birth.

Now the place on which Abraham erected the altar was the same upon which Adam had brought his first sacrifice, and Cain and Abel offered their gifts to God. On this place Noah built an altar to God after he had left the ark, and on the same spot the Temple was destined to be built.

4. The Death of Sarah

When Satan saw that Abraham and Isaac were about to return home, he went to Sarah and appeared to her in the figure of an old man, very humble and meek, and said to her: "Alas, didst thou hear what had happened?"

"No, I heard nothing," answered Sarah.

"Dost thou not know," said Satan, "that thy husband Abraham suddenly lost his mind, that he took his son Isaac, bound him, put him upon an altar on a mountain and killed him? The boy cried bitterly, and begged his father to have mercy on him, but he did not listen to him, and slaughtered him."

Sarah wept bitterly when she heard this report. She then went about to look for her son, till she came to Hebron. "Did you perhaps see my son somewhere?" she asked of all the passers-by. But no one could tell her what had happened to her son Isaac.

Satan was not satisfied with this plan, so he changed himself into the figure of a young man, resembling Isaac, and he rushed suddenly into Sarah's tent and cried out: "O mother, father tried to kill me, but I escaped." As soon as Sarah saw her lovely son Isaac, she died from great joy.

Abraham and his son returned home and noticed from afar that the doors of Sarah's tent, which had always been kept open, were now shut. They advanced slowly towards the tent. They were greatly frightened, when on approaching still nearer, they found that the doors were locked, and that the light that used to burn there continually was now put out. They understood that something bad had happened and they ran to their neighbors and asked them about Sarah.

"Oh," said the neighbors, "Sarah was told that her son had been killed, and she went to look for him in Hebron." They quickly went there, and when they arrived, they found Sarah dead. Abraham and Isaac wept bitterly over her.

Abraham then went to Ephron and asked him to sell him the cave of Machpellah, as a burial place for Sarah. Ephron sold it to him for four hundred shekels of silver. When Abraham and the mourners reached the cave of Machpellah, he lifted up the stone which covered it and hewed out a grave for Sarah. Then Adam and Eve got up from their couches, and said: "How can we lie in the place where Sarah is buried? As it is, we are ashamed that we had sinned against God in the Garden of Eden. And now that this righteous and blessed woman has come here to be with us we shall be even more ashamed in the presence of God."

"Return to your places," said Abraham, "for I shall pray for you to God, and you shall be no more ashamed." Adam consented and went back to his place, but Eve refused to do so, till Abraham with his own hand carried Eve back to her place.

After Abraham had buried his wife, he sent Isaac to the house of Shem to learn the wisdom of God.

CHAPTER XIV

ELIEZER'S MISSION

1. Abraham's Request



WHEN Abraham grew old, he said to his servant, Eliezer, "I do not want my son Isaac to take one of the daughters of this country as a wife, because they are all idol worshipers. Go, therefore, to the country where I came from, and there choose a wife for my son. Here is a scroll which I have written and signed. There it is stated that all that I possess is given away to my son Isaac. Take this paper and show it to the father of the girl, whom God has appointed for Isaac."

Eliezer then took ten of the camels belonging to his master, and muzzled them so that they might not eat of the food belonging to strangers. He loaded the camels with jewels and other precious things, and mounted ten of his master's servants upon them. He also took the document which Abraham had drawn up and went to the city of Nahor.

"Go down at once," said God to two angels, "and let one of you guard Eliezer on his way, and let the other make Rebekah appear before him at the fountain at the moment he arrives there."

As Eliezer walked on, pillars of fire lighted the way when it was dark. While he was thus walking and watching the wonderful sights, he was greatly surprised to find himself so quickly by the well which was near Haran. It generally took sixteen days to cover the distance to Haran, but he covered it in one day. "Surely, it is God who has caused all that," thought Eliezer and when he approached the well, he prayed to; God that he send forth a girl who was righteous, honorable and kind, that she might become the wife of Isaac, who was also righteous and kind.

2. Rebekah at the Well

At that moment the angel came into the house of Rebekah and prompted her to go to the well. She took her pitcher and went to get some water. When she came to the well and drew some water in her pitcher, she saw a little boy crying.

"What happened to you, little boy?" inquired Rebekah.

"While I was running I hit my foot against a rock, and now it is bleeding," the boy answered. Rebekah immediately took her pitcher off her shoulder and washed the boy's wounded foot. She also took off her kerchief and dressed the wound with it. "Now," she said to him, "you may return home, and do not worry, for you will soon be cured."

When she walked a little further she met a blind woman. Rebekah took pity on her and said: "Pray tell me if you know your way home."

"If I don't find my way home, I will stay in the fields overnight as I did the night before," the woman replied.

"Do tell me where you live," persisted Rebekah, "so that I can lead you home." The woman thanked her and Rebekah took her to her house.

When Rebekah returned to the well, she was very tired. She sat down upon a stump of a tree to rest. "You are certainly tired," she said to an old man, who happened to pass by. "Here, come and sit down upon this stump where I am sitting," said Rebekah. The old man thanked her for her kindness and sat down. She then went to the well again, and filled her pitcher.

Eliezer watched Rebekah's acts closely, and he thought, "Surely this kind maiden is worthy to become the wife of my master's son."

"Pray, let me have a little water from your pitcher," he said to Rebekah.

"Drink to your heart's content, my master," said she, while she hastily took the pitcher of water off her shoulder. When he had drunk, she said: "I will also give water to your camels, they are surely thirsty after the long journey."

All this time Eliezer looked on in amazement. When the camels had finished drinking, he took out a nose-ring set with a precious stone and two golden bracelets and, handing them to Rebekah, he said: "Pray tell me, whose daughter are you? And is there room in your father's house for us to lodge in tonight?"

"I am the daughter of Bethuel," she said. "We have plenty of straw and fodder, and plenty of room in our house for you to lodge." When Eliezer received this answer he was greatly astonished, and he thanked the Lord God who had not abandoned him while on the way.

3. Eliezer Saved from Death

Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. When Laban saw the beautiful presents that his sister had gotten, he said to himself: "That man is certainly very rich. I shall make haste to kill him, and take all the gold and silver away from him."

"This man is running toward me," said Eliezer on beholding Laban, "and he is not a friend. He looks to be an enemy, and he comes here with evil intentions, for his face is that of a murderer." Eliezer then mentioned the name of God and his camels suddenly rose in the air and remained on high. He again mentioned the name of God, and he himself was raised in the air, high above his camels. Laban was surprised at this sight, and greatly feared Eliezer, and he said to himself: "I am no match for that man." He then said to Eliezer: "Why do you stand outside? Come with me for we have plenty of room in our house for you to lodge in."

When the people of the town saw the costly presents which Rebekah had gotten from Eliezer they said to one another: "Indeed, that man is very wealthy. Let us go and kill him, and take away everything he has." When they reached the well, they found Laban talking to Eliezer. Eliezer saw them come, and knew that they came with evil intentions. He seized two of his camels, one under each of his arms, and carried them across the river. When the people saw the wonderful strength Eliezer possessed, they became frightened and ran back to the town.

Eliezer, guided by Laban, came to Bethuel's house, and there he untied his camels and fed them. "How can I get all the wealth of this man?" said Bethuel to himself. At last he hit upon a plan and joyously exclaimed: "I will put poison into the plate of soup that is given to Eliezer, and when he dies, I shall take away everything he has."

When the deadly plate was placed before Eliezer, and he was requested by Bethuel to eat, he said: "I promised my master not to eat or drink until I have fulfilled my mission." While he was thus telling his story an angel came down from heaven and changed the plates. He placed the deadly plate before Bethuel, and Bethuel's plate he placed before Eliezer. When Eliezer had told about his mission, Bethuel said: "Since God had willed it so we will consent to your wishes, and Rebekah shall become the wife of Isaac." Eliezer then took out gold and silver and beautiful dresses and gave them to Rebekah. But suddenly, when Bethuel tasted the soup, he uttered a terrible cry, for he had swallowed the poison. He died instantly.

A few days after, Eliezer and Rebekah set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to Beersheba, Rebekah noticed that a man, who looked very kind, was coming to meet them.

"Who is that man?" she asked Eliezer.

"This man," said Eliezer, "is my master.

Rebekah was brought to the house of Abraham and the doors of Sarah's tent were again opened for the poor and needy. The beautiful clouds once more came down from heaven and surrounded the tent, and the light which shed cheerful rays through the entire house in the lifetime of Sarah, reappeared. Isaac then understood that God was with him, and that he gave him a wife who was righteous and kind.

As a reward for his faithfulness, Abraham freed his servant Eliezer and gave him many precious gifts.

CHAPTER XV

JACOB AND ESAU

1. Their Birth



REBEKAH, the wife of Isaac, had born to him no children. One day she said to Isaac: "I was told that your mother Sarah did not bear any children before she was an aged woman. Then Abraham prayed for her and God listened to his prayer and Sarah gave birth to a son. Pray follow your father's example, and pray to God that I may bear a child."

Isaac and Rebekah went to Mount Moriah, and when they reached the place where Isaac was bound by his father to be sacrificed as an offering to God, he prayed to God thus: "Thou hast promised my father Abraham that Thou wilt make his children as numerous as the stars in heaven and the sand upon the seashore, and that they will have their own land. Now, let Thy word be fulfilled, O Lord, and grant that my wife Rebekah give birth to a child."

God listened to Isaac's prayer and granted his wish.

One day Rebekah happened to pass a temple, where there were idol-worshippers, and she suddenly felt great pains in her body. She continued her walk, and when she passed by a synagogue, she again felt great pain. She was much worried about it, and she went to the synagogue of Shem and Eber, which was built on Mount Moriah, to inquire of them what the cause of her pains was. And this was their reply:

"Know, O virtuous woman, that you will bear two children; and from them two great nations will spring up. One of them will inherit the pleasures of this world, and he will be an idol-worshiper. The second will inherit the bliss of the future world, and he will be a believer in the true God in heaven."

Rebekah bore twin sons to Isaac. The first one she named Esau, and the second one Jacob. When the boys reached the age of thirteen years, they were taken out from school.

"Now, let me continue my studies," said Jacob to his brother. "I will go to the synagogue of Shem and Eber, and there study the wisdom and knowledge of God."

"What do I care about the knowledge and wisdom of God," said Esau. "I would rather go to the forests and fields with my bow and arrows, and hunt animals and birds; and thus spend my time in pleasure and sport."

2. The Slyness of Esau

Isaac, misled by Esau's false words, loved him greatly. But Rebekah and their aged grandfather, Abraham, were very fond of Jacob. Esau was a sly and cunning boy, while Jacob was a simple and just boy, and people called him the "Flower."

One day Esau was told that two men were put in prison; one for stealing, and the other for murdering; but they refused to confess their crimes.

"Did they already confess?" inquired Esau of the judge, when he reached the courthouse.

"No, they did not confess," answered the judge. "They will not admit their crimes."

"Bring the thief to me," said Esau, "and I will show you that he will confess his crime." Thereupon the judge ordered the thief to be brought before him.

"Confess that you have stolen," said Esau to the thief.

"I did not steal," said the thief angrily.

"Oh," said Esau, "I know that you are an honest man, and the word 'thief' is not a suitable name for you. But pray, tell me, what is the name of the man that shared with you in the theft?"

"That rascal fled, and he took my portion as well," said the thief angrily. "I wish I could catch him and make him pay the penalty."

"Take him to prison at once," ordered the judge.

Then the judge ordered the murderer to be brought before Esau. "Why did the slain person strike you on the cheek a few times?" inquired Esau.

"You are a liar," said the murderer. Do you think that I would let a coward like him strike me? Ask all the people of this town and they will tell what a powerful and courageous man I am."

"Now let this man also go to prison and be punished for his crime," said the judge, "because they have both admitted their guilt."

Esau knew that his father Isaac was a holy man, and he therefore tried his best to find favor in his eyes. He used to bring him the best of wines and the best of meats, in order to obtain his blessings. One day, Esau, seeing that his father did not wish to give him his blessings, said: "Now I am going to deceive my father and make him think that I am good." He came to his father and sat down in front of him.

"Where do you come from, my son?" asked Isaac.

"I went to hear the word of God in the house of Shem and Eber," answered Esau.

"You have done well, my dear boy," answered Isaac with great joy.

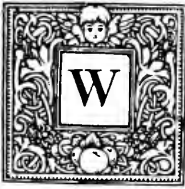
"Now," said Esau, "I will give one-tenth of everything I have to the poor people. But dear father, I want to ask you one question: Is it also necessary to give one-tenth of salt and straw to the poor people?"

"You are certainly a good boy," said Isaac, "and your thoughts are nothing but good and righteous." When God saw that Isaac intended to bless his son Esau, He said: "Let the eyes of Isaac grow dim, so that he may not be able to see. Then Jacob, who is simple and just, will come and receive the blessing instead of Esau."

CHAPTER XVI

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM

1. Michael's Mission



WHEN the day of the death of Abraham drew near, the sixty-three thousand eight hundred and seventy-five days that he lived flew up to heaven and presented themselves before God. "O Mighty Lord of the Universe," they said, "we have all come here this day to testify about Thy faithful servant Abraham, how during all the days he lived he has done nothing but that which is just and right; how he made Thy name great through his kind acts, and how he spread peace and truth among the inhabitants of the earth."

God then said to the angel Michael: "Go and tell My servant Abraham that his time to depart from life has arrived."

Michael, in the form of a human being, came to Abraham and found him by his oxen. Abraham, thinking that he was a wayfarer, said: "Pray sit down for a little while; I will order a beast to be brought, and we will go together to my house. There you will rest over night, for it is towards evening, and in the morning you arise and go wherever you please."

Abraham called one of his servants, and said to him: "Go and bring me a beast, that the stranger may ride upon it, for he is wearied with his journey."

"I abstain from ever sitting upon any four-footed beast," said Michael; "let us walk therefore till we reach the house."

On their way to the house they passed a very large tree, and Abraham heard a voice from its branches singing: "Holy are you, because you have kept the purpose for which you were sent." Abraham hid the secret in his heart, thinking that the stranger did not hear it. Arrived at his house, he ordered his servants to prepare a meal, and while they were busy with

their work, he called to his son Isaac and said to him: "Arise and put water in the vessel that the stranger may wash his feet." When Isaac brought the vessel, Abraham said: "In this basin I shall never again put water for wayfarers to wash their feet." Hearing this, Isaac began to weep, and Abraham, seeing his son weep, also wept, and Michael, seeing both of them weep, wept also, and the tears of Michael fell into the water, and became precious stones.

Before sitting down to the table, Michael went outside, and, in the twinkling of an eye ascended to heaven. He stood before the Lord and said: "Lord and Master, I am unable to remind that righteous man of his death, for I have not seen upon the earth a man like him, refraining from every evil deed."

"Go down to My friend Abraham," said God, "and I will cast the thought of his death into the heart of his son Isaac in a dream. Isaac will relate the dream to his father and thou shalt interpret it."

2. Michael Explains the Dream

God thereupon opened the mouth of the angel that he may eat and drink, and when he went into the house of Abraham, they all ate and drank and were merry. When the supper was ended, they all prayed to God and after that they lay down to sleep. About the seventh hour of the night, Isaac awoke and came to the door of his father's chamber, crying out, "Open, father, that I may touch you before they take you away from me." And Abraham wept together with his son, and when Michael saw them weep, he wept likewise.

Abraham made Isaac relate his dream, which Michael interpreted, saying: "Thy son Isaac has spoken the truth, for thou shalt be taken up into heaven, but thy body shall remain on earth, until seven thousand ages are fulfilled, for then all flesh shall arise from their graves."

"Now I know that thou art an angel of the Lord," said Abraham, "and thou wast sent to take my soul, but I will not go with thee, but do whatever thou art commanded."

Michael returned to heaven and said: "Lord God, Abraham refuses to obey me, and does not want to give up his soul."

"Go down again," commanded God, "and tell Abraham not to rebel against Me. Remind him also that no one who has come from Adam and Eve can escape death."

When Abraham heard the message of God, he said to Michael: "I am ready to give up my soul to God, but I desire one wish of mine to be fulfilled while I am still alive: I wish to be taken up to heaven, that I may see the creatures that the Lord had created in heaven and on earth."

Michael took Abraham upon a heavenly chariot, lifted him up into the air of the heavens, and led him upon the clouds, together with sixty angels. Abraham ascended upon the chariot over all the earth and saw all things that are below on the earth, and he was also brought to the place where all souls are judged. There he saw two gates, one broad and the other one narrow; the narrow one leading to Paradise, through which all the just and pious enter, and the broad one leading to destruction and eternal punishment, through which all sinners enter.

God then removed the soul of Abraham as in a dream, and the angel took it up into heaven.

When the death of Abraham became known, men, women and children, even kings and princes from all over the world, gathered to weep for him. When they reached the cave of Machpelah, they found the place which Abraham had chosen for his burial place, and they buried him there. And the people mourned over him for a whole year and his name and memory became a blessing to this very day.

CHAPTER XVII

JACOB THE SIMPLE

1. The Sale of the Birth-right



ON the day of Abraham's death, Esau committed five crimes. One of the crimes was murder. The men whom he had slain were Nimrod and two of his servants.

On that day Esau went out hunting in the forest and from far he saw Nimrod and his men who likewise came out hunting. The garments worn by Nimrod were the same that had been worn by Adam and Eve when they left the Garden of Eden. All animals, on seeing the garments, approached Nimrod and bowed to him. Esau, espying this, grew very envious and sought to kill him. It happened that Nimrod was separated from his people, and only two of his men remained with him. When Esau noticed this, he lay in ambush and waited until Nimrod passed him. Then he threw himself upon Nimrod and killed him. When Nimrod's companions came to his aid, he killed them likewise. The attendants of Nimrod heard the cries of their friends and ran toward the spot where the murder was committed. But before they had reached the place Esau had time enough to strip Nimrod of his garments and flee for his life.

After slaying Nimrod, Esau hastened breathlessly toward the city, for he greatly feared lest he be overtaken. Tired and exhausted he appeared at the tent of Jacob, and found him busy preparing a dish of lentiles.

"Why are you preparing lentiles?" asked Esau of Jacob.

"Because our granfather Abraham passed away," he said, "and these lentiles are used by me as a mourner's meal. These lentiles shall be a sign of my grief."

"If the pious as well as the wicked die," said Esau, "what good is it to be righteous and pious? Now we can clearly see that there is no future world, and that there is no special reward for the righteous. Why should I then exert myself to do what is good? Now, come Jacob, let me have some of the lentiles, for I am tired and hungry."

"Why should this wicked Esau enjoy the birth-right?" thought Jacob to himself, "and offer sacrifices to God as a priest?" "Tell me, brother," said Jacob to Esau, "if you do not believe that there is a future world, and that God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous, will you sell me the birth-right for the lentiles which I am to give you?"

"Oh, I am going to die anyway," said Esau, "and what good will this birth-right do me? You can have it and let me have some of your wine, lentiles and bread."

When Esau had finished his meal, he invited his friends to make game of Jacob. "Now see, my friends," said Esau to them, "what I did to Jacob. I ate of his lentiles, drank of his wine, and sold my birth-right to him." Jacob did not reply to his brother's jeers, he said: "Swear by the life of our father, that you sell me the birth-right." Esau did so. And he also signed a document in which he gave up all his rights to the cave of Machpelah.

2. Isaac Among the Philistines

Soon a famine came upon the land and Isaac wished to go to Egypt. But God appeared to him and said: "Remain in the land and cultivate it." Isaac obeyed the command of God and settled in Gerar.

While Isaac stayed in Gerar he walked in the ways of his father Abraham. He opened his hand wide to the poor and needy, and he never refused help to anybody. God therefore blessed the works of his hand, and in spite of the famine, Isaac's field brought forth plenty. He kept nine-tenths of the products of the soil, and the remainder he gave to the poor.

When the people of the land saw that Isaac was prosperous and God was with him, his fame spread all over the country, and

they spoke of him more than they did of their own king. When Abimelech came to Gerar and learned that, he grew very jealous of Isaac and he said to him: "When you came to this country you only had a small flock, and now you have grown very rich. My servants and my people speak of none but you, and they admire none but you. Therefore get you gone from us."

Isaac then left the city of Gerar and settled in the valley of Gerar. While Isaac was away from the city of Gerar many evils and troubles befell the inhabitants as well as the king. His counsellors then said to him: "O king, do you not know that Isaac was a protection to the city, and that God had blessed the city for his sake? Therefore go now and recall him. Make a treaty with him so that you may henceforth be friends."

Abimelech listened to the advice of his counsellors, and he took with him his chief general and went to make a treaty with Issac.

"Wherefore have you come to me?" said Isaac on seeing Abimelech. "Surely, you hate me for you drove me out of your land."

And Abimelech answered: "Now I see that God is with you, and therefore I desire to make an everlasting treaty between you and myself." Isaac then made a treaty with the king of Gerar and his chief general, and after he had feasted them, they departed.

After that God appeared to Isaac and said: "Go out from this land and return to thine own land, the land of Canaan." Isaac then went to the land of Canaan and settled in Hebron. While in Hebron Jacob went to the school of Shem and Eber to learn the wisdom of God. And Esau insisted on staying home, under the pretext that he must provide his old father with food from the forest. In truth, he simply intended to pass his time in hunting and other pastimes.

3. Jacob Takes the Blessing

One day Isaac called to his son Esau and said: "I am old and I am about to die, and I desire to bestow my blessings upon you. Now, my son, take your bow and arrow, go to the forest

and hunt for some game. Prepare it and bring it to me so that I can bless you before I die."

Rebekah, on hearing this, was greatly grieved. She said to herself: "Shall my good son Jacob be overlooked and not receive the blessings from his father, while my wicked son Esau receives all the blessings from him?" And she wept bitterly. Thereupon a voice came down from heaven, and exclaimed: "The eyes of Isaac shall become dim and he will be unable to distinguish between Esau and Jacob, so that Jacob may receive the blessings from him instead of Esau."

Esau then went to the forest. He caught a stag, bound it, and tied it to a tree. "Now," said Esau to himself, "I shall go and get another one." But while Esau was away trying to get another stag, Satan came along, loosened the ties of the stag and the stag ran away. Esau then came back with another stag and was surprised to find that the first one had escaped. He tied the second one to a stump of a tree, and said: "Surely, this stag will not escape from me." But Satan came and loosened this stag as well. Disappointed, Esau caught some birds. But the birds were scared by Satan and they all fled from him. All this was done so that in the meantime Jacob might have enough time to prepare savory meat for his father and receive his blessings.

"Now, my son," said Rebekah to Jacob, "Go to the flock and fetch me two young kids. I will prepare them and you will bring them to your father and be blessed instead of Esau."

"How can I do a thing like that?" said Jacob in astonishment. "How can I deceive my father?"

"Now," she said, "you must do what I say. Go and fetch me the kids."

"But," persisted Jacob, "if my father discovers that I deceived him, he will curse me instead of blessing me."

"That curse," answered Rebekah, "will fall upon me, and if you deceive your father that sin will likewise rest on me. But do as I tell you, and lose no time."

"But should my father feel my hands and neck," argued Jacob, "he will surely know that I am Jacob, and not Esau. For

my brother's hands and neck are covered with hair, while my hands and neck are smooth."

"I will find a remedy for that," said Rebekah. "But lose no time and run."

Jacob brought the kids to his mother, who prepared savory meat from them, according to the liking of Isaac. And she covered Jacob's hand and neck with the skin of the kids.

As soon as Jacob opened the door of Isaac's tent, it was filled with fragrant odors from the Garden of Eden, and Isaac was greatly pleased.

"Pray, father," said Jacob softly and gently, "rise and eat from the savory meat, which I have prepared for you so that you may bless me before you die."

At that moment a heavenly voice came down and said: "Because Jacob spoke so softly and gently to his father, therefore will I help his children in time of distress, and disperse all their enemies."

"How is it that you have found it so quickly?" asked Isaac in wonderment.

"Oh, God was merciful to me" answered Jacob.

As soon as Isaac heard the name of the Lord mentioned, he said to himself: "Surely, this is not my son Esau, for he never pronounced the name of God. Who are you?" he asked. "Are you really my son Esau?"

"Yes, father," answered Jacob. "I am your first born son Esau."

"Come near me, so that I can feel you and see whether you are really my son Esau."

Jacob grew faint-hearted, and was afraid to approach his father, but two angels came down from heaven, and taking Jacob by the arms, led him to his father, who felt him and said: "Surely, the voice is that of my son Jacob, but the hands are those of my son Esau. Bring me the meat and wine," continued Isaac, "so that I may bless you before I die."

When Isaac had finished eating and drinking, he put his hands on Jacob's head and blessed him.

Jacob had hardly left his father, when his brother Esau opened the door of the tent and exclaimed harshly: "Let my

father arise and eat of his son's game." With Esau entered all the horrors of hell and the walls of the tent began to shake.

And Isaac saw a big fire burning, and Esau standing nearby and putting more wood on, in order to increase the flames. "O, merciful God, who will be burnt in this fiery furnace?" inquired Isaac, "I, or my son Jacob?"

"Neither thou nor thy son Jacob," answered God, "but thy son Esau."

Isaac trembled violently and exclaimed: "Who are you?"

"I am your first born son," answered Esau.

"Who is he then, that brought some savory meat to me and I blessed him?" asked Isaac, and he wanted to take away the blessing from Jacob and say: "Let him be cursed."

"What art thou about to do?" said God to him. "Thou art bringing a curse upon thyself. For hast thou not said to Jacob: "Cursed be he that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth Thee?"

Upon hearing this Isaac exclaimed: "Let him be blessed."

"Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" cried Esau, and he began to weep bitterly. When Isaac heard him cry, he took pity on him and was about to bless him too, but God said unto him: "Dost thou wish to bless thy wicked son Esau? His descendants will, in time to come, destroy my Holy Temple, and scatter my people among all the nations."

Esau continued to wail. "This evil man cries for his very life," said God, "and shall I let him depart empty handed?" He then bade Isaac bless his eldest son.

CHAPTER XVIII

JACOB'S DEPARTURE

1. Jacob Pursued by Eliphaz



ESAU hated his brother Jacob, and looked for a chance to kill him. Rebekah, the ever-watching mother, knew it and one day she called Jacob and said to him: "My son, I know that your brother Esau intends to kill you. Thus I shall be deprived of the two of you in one day. Now, my son, listen to me, and flee to my brother Laban in Haran. With him you will stay until your brother Esau shall forget what you have done to him."

Thereupon, Rebekah went to the aged Isaac, and said to him, "I hate the daughters of Canaan, for they are all idol-worshippers." Should our loving son Jacob marry one of the daughters of this land, what good is life to me? I pray that you may grant him permission to go to my brother Laban, and marry one of the daughters of that land."

Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, and gave him many gifts of silver and gold, and ordered him to go to his uncle Laban. Jacob kissed his father and mother, and set out for Haran.

A few days passed, and when Esau learned of the flight of his brother, he said to his oldest son Eliphaz, "My son, you are swift of leg, take your sword and some of your men with you, and run after Jacob. Kill him, and take away all the silver and gold he has with him." Now Eliphaz was a noted hunter and a valiant man of the mountains; he lost no time, took ten of his men, and ran after Jacob.

"Is your coming in peace?" asked Jacob of Eliphaz when he was overtaken.

Eliphaz and his men drew their swords and advanced towards Jacob. When he came near he said: "My father ordered

me to kill you and take away all that you have with you. Now, get ready to die."

"You can take all the money, gold and silver I have, but spare my life," begged Jacob of him, "for what have I done to you? Know you that the descendants of Abraham will have to serve four hundred years in a land that is not theirs. If you slay me, then you, the seed of Esau, will have to pay the debt."

"Your words have softened my heart," said Eliphaz, "Give me all the silver and gold you have, and I shall spare your life."

Jacob then gave him all he had, and Eliphaz and his men departed from him.

2. The Dream

It was still high noon when Jacob reached the mount of Moriah, and he therefore intended to pass by without a stop. But suddenly the sun set, and it grew dark. "What can this signify?" thought Jacob to himself. "Well then, I must stay over night in this place." And Jacob took twelve stones from the altar on which his father Isaac had lain bound as a sacrifice, and he put them around him as a fence. "For," said he, "these stones around me will protect me so that no animal of the wilderness can approach at night and devour me." The rest of the stones he put under his head in place of a pillow.

Then the stones began to quarrel among themselves. "Upon me shall this righteous man rest his head," contended each stone.

When God saw this, He said: "Let all these stones become one, so that no quarrel will take place among them." At once all the stones joined themselves together and became one. Jacob put this stone under his head in place of a pillow, and fell soundly asleep.

In his sleep Jacob dreamt that he saw a ladder standing upon the ground, the top of which reached heaven. He saw angels of God ascending to heaven and descending from there to the earth. Suddenly the heavens opened, and on the top of the ladder was God Himself, who thus spoke to Jacob: "Fear not, Jacob, for I shall be with thee and guard thee wherever thou goest." God then folded together the whole land of

Palestine, put it under Jacob and said to him: "The land upon which thou art lying to thee will I give it and to thy children."

Jacob awoke from his sleep in great astonishment and said: "How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." He then made a vow and said: "If God will be with me and guard me on my way, and will provide me with bread to eat and clothing to put on, I will give one-tenth of whatever I have to the poor and needy; and the Lord God in heaven shall be my God."

3. Jacob at the Well

Early in the morning, with renewed hope and courage, Jacob continued the journey to his uncle Laban. When the day was far advanced Jacob came near Haran, and the first thing that drew his attention was a well in the field. Three shepherds with their flocks were lying round about the well, and on the top of it was such a heavy stone that it took forty men to remove it from its place.

"My friends, whence are you?" asked Jacob of the shepherds.

"We are from Haran," was the reply.

"Do you know Laban, the son of Nahar?" inquired Jacob.

"We know him," they answered.

"Is it well with him?" asked Jacob again.

"It is well," they said. "But recently there broke out a pest among his flock, and few of his large herd were left. Laban therefore no longer needs shepherds to tend to his flock, but gave the few that he had left in charge of his daughter Rachel. We expect her here soon, and when she comes you can inquire of her whatever you desire to know."

"Why do you tarry around the well?" inquired Jacob. "The sun is still high, and there is plenty of time left in which to pasture the flock. Why not water them now, and let them feed again?"

"Do you not see the huge stone at the mouth of the well?" said they. "We are waiting here for all the shepherds to come

and help us remove it. Then we will water our flocks and let them go to feed."

While he was thus speaking to them, Rachel arrived with her father's flock. When he learned that she was the daughter of Laban, he immediately approached the well and without the aid of the shepherds removed the stone from the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of his uncle. When Rachel was told by Jacob that he was her cousin, she quickly ran home and informed her father of his arrival.

When Laban heard of Jacob's coming, he reasoned: "If Eliezer, the bondman, came with ten camels all laden with precious things, surely Jacob, the favorite son of Isaac and Rebekah, would not be allowed to come here empty-handed. He must be laden with wealth and great riches." He quickly ran to meet Jacob. Seeing that Jacob had neither slaves nor camels with him, he thought of himself: "No doubt he is laden with precious stones and money and he is keeping them in his girdle. Let me embrace him, throw my arms around him and feel his garments." Having felt his garments, and not being able to discover any riches or wealth on Jacob's person, he was greatly disappointed and grieved. Laban then invited his nephew Jacob to go home with him.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE HOUSE OF LABAN

1. Jacob Serves for Rachel



WHILE Jacob was in the house of Laban, he did not stay idle. "I do not want my uncle to support me free of charge," said Jacob to himself. "I must earn my living." He therefore did all kinds of work in the house and the field. A few weeks had passed, and when Laban saw how faithful Jacob was in his work, he said to him one day: "Because you are my kinsman should you serve me for naught? Tell me what shall your reward be."

Now, Laban had two daughters, the elder of which was named Leah and the younger Rachel. Rachel was very beautiful, while Leah's eyes were weak and tender. And this was the cause of Leah's tender eyes: She was told by all her neighbors and friends that her aunt Rebekah gave birth to two sons, the elder of which was named Esau, and the younger Jacob. The older son was very wicked, while the younger was good and righteous. She was then told that she being the older daughter of Laban, would have to get married to Esau, and her sister Rachel would be married to Jacob. For many days, even years, Leah prayed to God and continually wept that He may not cause her to become the wife of the wicked Esau. Thus she wept over her fate until her eyelashes dropped from her lids.

"I will serve you seven years for your daughter Rachel," said Jacob to Laban.

"Agreed," said Laban. "It is more pleasant for me to give my daughter to you as a wife than that I should give her to anybody else."

Jacob worked with Laban for seven years, during which time he performed his services faithfully. God was with him in

everything he did, and as a result the wealth of Laban increased immensely.

2. Jacob Deceived by Laban

At the end of seven years when the time had come for Laban to give his daughter Rachel to Jacob as wife, he gathered together all the people of the neighborhood, and said to them: "Do you know that God had blessed you all on account of Jacob, the son of my sister?"

"Indeed," said they, "we are aware of it. From the day Jacob came into our midst all has gone well with us, and God has blessed us in everything. For God has sent us His blessings, and there is always enough water in the well for our cattle and ourselves, while before he came we had suffered from lack of water."

"Now, my friends," said Laban, "the seven years of Jacob's term has ended this day, and I must give him my daughter Rachel as wife. He will then no longer stay with us, but he will take his wife and return with her to his own country."

On hearing this all his neighbors were greatly troubled and they all said to him: "What then is your advice? We are ready to do whatever you tell us."

"If you desire that Jacob remain with us," said Laban, "I am going to deceive him. On the night of the wedding I will give him Leah instead of Rachel as his wife, and then he will have to stay with me and serve me seven more years for Rachel, whom he loves dearly."

"Your advice is excellent," exclaimed all those assembled with great joy.

"Now," said Laban, "if it is really your desire that Jacob remain with us, you must keep whatever I said to you as a secret. But I do not believe in your promises. What I want is that each and every one of you give me a pledge of some gold or silver, that you will not betray me."

They all went home, brought gold and silver with them and gave it to Laban as a pledge. Laban took all the articles they brought and sold them, and with the money he bought wine, oil

and meat with which he prepared a great feast for them. They feasted all day and until midnight. They drank so much wine that they became drunk, and while singing and dancing they all shouted, "Halia, Halia" (Ha Leah, this is Leah). Seeing that Jacob paid no attention to their shouting, they continued until their throats became dry. But Jacob, simple as he was, still took no heed of what they shouted.

At the wedding ceremony Laban took his daughter Leah, covered her face with a bride's veil, and brought her instead of Rachel to the bride-groom. When the wedding ceremonies were over, and the veil was removed from the bride's face, Jacob said to Laban: "Why have you deceived me? I have served you seven years for Rachel and not for Leah?"

"It is not customary in our place," answered Laban, "to give the younger in marriage before the elder. Serve me another seven years and I shall give you my daughter Rachel, too, as wife."

3. Jacob Serves Thirteen More Years

Jacob consented to stay seven more years with Laban. When all the neighbors heard of this new arrangement they came to Laban and asked him for their pledges. "Your pledges," said Laban, "were sold, and with the money I prepared you that wonderful feast." They grew angry at Laban because they were compelled to redeem their pledges from those who had sold Laban the meat and wine. Laban's neighbors then said, "he shall no longer be called Laban, the son of Bethuel, but Arami (deceiver), because he deceived all the people of his place."

Jacob stayed seven more years with Laban for his daughter Rachel. His wives bore to him eleven sons and one daughter, while in the house of Laban. At the end of fourteen years, Rebekah sent her nurse Deborah, the daughter of Uz, accompanied by two of her slaves, to Jacob. She asked that they deliver a message to Jacob that he return to the house of his father in the land of Canaan. When Jacob received this message from his mother, he came to his father-in-law and said to him: "Now, it is time for me to take my wives and children for whom I have served you, and go back to my father's house."

Laban said: "You well know that God was with me, and blessed me on account of you, and made me very rich. Now tell me whatever wage you desire, and I shall not refuse it to you." Jacob did not care to remain any longer with Laban. But the latter insisted, and Jacob said "if you will give me as my wage for serving you, all the speckled and spotted ones that are born among your goats, and the red ones that are born among your sheep, I will remain with you."

Laban consented to give such reward, and Jacob remained with him for six more years. During this time Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times, but God was with Jacob, and he grew very rich. Most of the sheep and goats that were born among the flock of Laban were speckled, spotted and red. Jacob became the owner of many thousands of sheep, cattle, camels and donkeys, and also of many slaves.

CHAPTER XX

JACOB'S RETURN TO CANAAN

1. Jacob Pursued by Laban



AT THE end of twenty years, Jacob noticed that Laban and his sons grew very envious of him and were not so kind to him as they used to be. Then God said to Jacob: "Return to the land of thy fathers, and I will be with thee." Jacob knew that Laban would not let him go away. He sent the very swift messenger, his son Naphtali, to Rachel and Leah to come to him to the field where he was minding his flock. When they came there, he said to them: "God appeared to me last night, and ordered me to leave for my father's house."

"Whatever God said, we are ready to do," they said.

When Laban was gone to shear his sheep Jacob got ready to depart. In the meantime Rachel went to her father's chamber and stole all the idols. She said to herself: "If I steal the idols from my father, he will perhaps stop worshiping them." Rachel concealed the idols among her clothes. When Jacob got ready to go, he took his wives and children and all his flock, and set out for the land of Canaan. On the third day after Jacob's departure, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. Angered at this news, Laban went to his house to inquire of his idols whither Jacob had gone. Finding that his idols had been stolen, he took his neighbors with him and ran after Jacob. After a seven days' journey he overtook him on the mountain of Gilead. Laban intended to kill Jacob and take away from him all his property.

At that moment, an angel named Saftier presented himself before God and said: "Have no mercy on Jacob, because he sinned against Thee, in that he left his father and mother for

twenty years, and did not serve them as it becomes a son to serve his parents." Then Righteousness and Mercy appeared before God and said: "Let Jacob be pitied for the sake of righteousness, and of his fathers Abraham and Isaac." And Saftier the angel continued and said: "Judge of all the Worlds, six years ago Rebekah had sent to Jacob asking him to return home, but he refused, and instead remained with Laban for six more years in order to become wealthy. Therefore, he deserves no pity." When Righteousness and Mercy heard this they remained silent. At that moment, Work came and presented himself before the Lord and said: "For twenty years Jacob served Laban with all his might. He suffered heat by day, and cold at night. Sleep never touched his eyes, and he kept watching the sheep which were intrusted to him by his father-in-law, as a man watches the apple of his eye. Many a time he risked his own life in order to save a sheep or a lamb from the clutches of the lion or the wolf. And when he departed from Laban, he did not touch anything that did not belong to him. Wherefore, then, should he be killed?" When the angel Saftier heard these words, he withdrew from the presence of God.

Then God came to Laban in a dream and said to him: "Beware, thou Laban, lest thou speakest to Jacob either good or evil." In the morning Laban overtook Jacob on the other side of the mountain of Gilead, and said to him: "What have you done to me? Why did you flee from me without giving me a chance to kiss my sons and my daughters? You carried them off, as if they had been captured by the sword, and not satisfied with all that, you even stole my gods. Now, it is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your fathers spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take heed lest thou speakest to Jacob either good or evil.'"

"All my tents are open to you," said Jacob, "You may search them all over for your gods. With whomever they may be found, he shall suffer death." When Laban was unable to find his images, Jacob rebuked him, and said: "You have looked all over my tents, and found nothing belonging to you; wherefore, then, did you run so hotly after me?" Laban finding no answer to the words of Jacob, made a treaty with him and returned

home. On arriving there, he found that all his household goods had been stolen from him. Angered at this, he sent his son Beor, accompanied by ten of his men, with a message to Esau reading thus: "I, your uncle Laban, wish to inform you that your brother Jacob was with me for twenty years. When he came here he was penniless and poor. I kept him with me, gave him my two daughters as wives, and now he is very wealthy. One day when I went to shear my flock, he escaped from me secretly and has gone to the land of Canaan. And what is more, he even stole my gods. Now, go out to meet him, and do to him as you desire."

2. Esau Desires to Wreak Vengeance

When Esau heard this, he reminded himself of the blessings which Jacob had taken from him, and went to meet Jacob. The messengers of Laban, who were very honest men, upon leaving the house of Esau, went to the land of Canaan and informed Rebekah of Esau's intentions. She became greatly troubled, and sent out seventy-two men to Jacob that they might be of some assistance to him in the fight. When the men came to Jacob, he recognized them, and asked for his parents' welfare. "They are well," they said, "and your mother has commanded us to tell you that when Esau approaches you, you shall beg him to save your life. Give him many presents, perhaps he will become reconciled." When Jacob heard the words of his mother, he wept bitterly and said: "I shall do whatever my mother tells me to." Jacob took some of his men and sent them as messengers to Esau, to speak to him thus: "For twenty years I was with Laban. I worked for him with all my might, and God gave me riches, although Laban tried to change my wages many a time. Now I am going to see my father and mother. And I beg you not to think that our father's blessing has enriched me. And I beg you not to do me any harm."

"I know," said Esau to the messengers when they had delivered this message to him, "that Jacob stole away from the house of Laban. Now I shall take my revenge on him, not only for myself, but also for my uncle Laban." When Jacob heard this answer, he was greatly worried. He said to himself: "If I am

forced to fight my brother, I am going to shed innocent blood, for in the battle some of his men might suffer death." He prayed to God thus: "O Lord God, when I was on the way to my uncle Laban, Thou didst promise to be with me, and guard me wherever I went. But since then many years have passed, I may have sinned against Thee, and forfeited Thy favor. I therefore pray unto Thee, O Lord, that if I do not deserve Thy protection, be with me yet, so that no innocent blood may be shed."

3. Esau Beaten by Angels

God listened to his prayer, and sent down three angels. They appeared before Esau and his men in the form of hundreds of thousands of warriors, riding on powerful steeds, and furnished with all kinds of weapons. They divided themselves into four columns and when the first division was sighted by Esau he trembled greatly and said: "To whom do you belong?"

"We are the servants of Jacob," they said. "Who can stand against us?" When Esau heard this, he fell off his horse in great terror, while his men fled. Esau called out to his men to return, and they did his bidding.

"And who art thou?" the angels asked him.

"I am Esau," he answered, "and these are my men."

"Strike them all and have no pity on them," said the leader of the angels. And the angels smote Esau and his men. Then the second group of angels passed by, and when they asked who he was, Esau said: "I am the son of Isaac, who was bound on mount Moriah, to be brought up as an offering to God." "Strike them all down and have no pity on them," was the reply. Then the third group passed by and repeated the same. When the fourth group arrived and inquired of Esau to whom he belonged, he said: "I am for my brother Jacob. I have not seen him for the last twenty years. Now I am going to see him, and inquire of him as to his welfare."

"Were it not for the sake of Jacob," they said, "we would leave not one of thy men alive." When Esau heard this, he feared greatly, and resolved not to fight with Jacob, because he saw that God was with him.

4. Jacob Wrestles with an Angel

Jacob took from whatever he had, and sent it as a gift to his brother Esau. He took some oxen, camels, cows, mules, etc., and gave them to his servants, dividing them into three droves. "Pass on before me and leave space between each and every drove," said Jacob to his servants. "And when you meet Esau, tell him that it is a gift to my lord Esau from his servant Jacob." The servants passed on with the herds, while he, his wives and children, stayed over night in the camp. At midnight Jacob arose, and took his wives and children across the brook of Jabbok. Then he took across his oxen, his flock and his tents. Across the brook, Jacob thought of a few jars which he had left on the other side. Not wanting to send any of his servants across the brook because they were very tired and overworked, he went himself to fetch those jars. While Jacob began putting the jars in order, he noticed a human form standing near him.

"Who are you?" inquired Jacob.

"I am a shepherd," said he, "I worked very hard to-day and now I am very tired. Look at that big herd of cattle behind me. I must take them all across the brook, and I am weary. I cannot do it now. Pray take all these oxen and sheep across the brook, and I will carry your jars."

Jacob agreed to the stranger's request, and began to carry the lambs across the brook. But to his great surprise the more sheep he carried across, the more there remained on the other shore. There was no end to the cattle, though Jacob worked almost all night. At last he lost all patience. He fell upon the shepherd and caught him by the throat, crying out: "Are you a magician? Is this a magic flock of cattle?"

"Dost thou wish to know what I am?" said the stranger, "I will show thee." While saying that, he touched the ground with his little finger, and flames burst forth from it, which consumed all the cattle. Seeing that Jacob was not daunted by his wonderful acts, the shepherd then assumed the form of an angel, and wrestled with him till daybreak. When dawn came, the angel requested Jacob to let him fly to heaven, so that he might utter the daily prayer to god, together with all

the other angels. But Jacob said to him: "I will not let thee depart, unless thou blessest me." The angel blessed Jacob and said to him: "Thy name shall be changed to Israel, for thou hast wrestled with an angel of God, and thou wast victorious." Jacob then crossed the brook and together with his escort, continued his journey.

5. Jacob Meets Esau

About mid-day Jacob noticed his brother Esau and the many people that were with him at a distance. Jacob prayed to God that He save him from the hand of Esau. When he had finished praying, he prepared for war with his brother. He first ordered the mothers to take care of their own children. Then he divided all his men into two companies and he placed over them Damesek and Alinns, the two sons of Eliezer, while he himself marched in front of them. "For," thought he, "if Esau has made up his mind to shed blood, let him kill me first. His anger will then abate, and he may spare my wives and children."

When Esau drew near to his brother, and recalled the beating he had received at the hands of the angels on his way, he thought to himself: "I will not kill my brother Jacob with bow and arrow, but I will bite him." But God was with Jacob, and his neck became as hard as ivory. When Esau ran to meet his brother he fell on his neck to bite him, but all his teeth broke on the ivory-like flesh of Jacob. Esau cried bitterly on the neck of his brother Jacob, not from anxiety and love, but because of his terrible pain.

"Who are all those people that I met on my way?" asked Esau after he felt a little relieved from his pains.

"They are my people," said Jacob, "and I sent those cattle to you as a present."

Esau at first refused to accept it from his brother, but when Jacob insisted, Esau accepted the present, then took leave of his brother. Jacob continued his journey, and encamped near the city of Shechem. There he built many tents for the poor and taught the people of the city to be just and kind in their dealings with one another.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAR WITH THE NINEVITES

1. The First Day of War



AFTER Simon and Levi, the two young sons of Jacob had destroyed the whole city of Shechem, Jacob and his sons departed thence. They had marched for eight days when they encountered a very powerful army, which had been sent from Nineveh to conquer the whole world. On coming in the neighborhood of Shechem, this army heard what Simon and Levi had done to the city and they decided to make war on Jacob.

"Fear not," said Jacob to his sons, "God will help you fight this mighty army."

With sword in hand, Jacob advanced towards the enemy, and in the first onslaught he killed twelve thousand of the enemy.

"Father, you are tired and exhausted," said Judah; "let me fight the enemy alone."

"My son," said Jacob, "I know your strength and bravery. None in the world is like you, and I trust you with the leadership."

Judah attacked the enemy and slew many thousands of tried and famous warriors. The battle raged hot in front and in the rear, and Levi hastened to his aid, and together they won a great victory over the Ninevites. Judah alone killed five thousand soldiers, and Levi dealt blows right and left with such vigor that the men of the enemy's army fell like stalks of grain under the scythe of the reaper.

Alarmed about their fate, the Ninevites said: "How long shall we fight with these devils? Let us return to our land,

lest they exterminate us root and branch." But their king desired to restrain them and said: "You heroes, you men of might and valor, have you lost your senses that you ask to return to your land? Is this your bravery? After you have subdued many kingdoms and countries, you are not able to hold out against twelve men. If the nations and the kings whom we have made tributary hear of this, they will rise against us as one man, and scorn us, and do with us as they please. Take courage, men of the great city of Nineveh, so that your name may be exalted, and you become not a mockery in the mouth of your enemies."

The words of their king inspired the warriors to continue the campaign. They sent messengers to all the lands to ask for help, and, reinforced by their allies, the Ninevites assualted Jacob a second time. He spoke to his sons, saying: "Take courage and be men, fight against your enemies." His twelve sons then took up their stand in twelve different places, leaving considerable intervals between one and another, and Jacob, with a sword in his right hand and a bow in his left, advanced to the combat. It was a desperate encounter for him. He had to ward off the enemy to the right and to the left. Nevertheless he inflicted a severe blow, and when a band of two thousand men beset him, he leapt up in the air and vanished from their sight. Twenty-two thousand he slew on this day, and when evening came he planned to flee under cover of darkness. But suddenly ninety thousand men appeared, and he was compelled to continue the fight. He rushed at them with his sword, but it broke, and he had to defend himself by grinding huge rocks into lime powder, and this he threw at the enemy and blinded them so that they could see nothing. Luckily, darkness was about to fall, and he could permit himself to take rest for the night.

2. The Second Day of War

But the army reappeared on the morrow ready for battle again, to take revenge on Jacob and his children. They blew

their trumpets, whereupon Jacob spoke to his sons, "Go forth and fight with your enemies." Issachar and Gad said that this day they would take the combat upon themselves, and their father bade them do it while their brothers kept guard and held themselves in readiness to aid and relieve the two combatants when they showed signs of exhaustion.

The leaders of the day slew forty-eight thousand warriors, and put to flight twelve myriads more, who concealed themselves in a cave. Issachar and Gad fetched trees from the woods, piled the trunks up in front of the opening of the cave, and set fire to them. When the fire blazed with a fierce flame, the warriors spoke saying: "Why should we stay in this cave and perish with the smoke and the heat? Rather will we go forth and fight with our enemies, for then we may have a chance of saving ourselves." They left the cave, going through openings at the side, and they attacked Issachar and Gad in front and behind. Dan and Naphtali saw the plight of their brothers and ran to their assistance. They laid about them with their swords, hewing a way for themselves to Issachar and Gad, and, joining them, they too, opposed the foe.

3. The Third Day of War

It was the third day of the conflict, and the Ninevites were reinforced by an army as numerous as the sand on the sea-shore. All the sons of Jacob united to oppose it, and they routed the host. But when they pursued after the enemy, the fugitives faced about and resumed the battle saying: "Why should we run away? Let us rather fight them, perhaps we may be victorious, now they are weary." A stubborn combat followed, and when Jacob saw the strong attack upon his children, he himself sprang into the thick of the battle and dealt blows right and left. Nevertheless the heathens were victorious, and succeeded in separating Judah from his brethren. As soon as Jacob was aware of the peril of his son, he whistled and Judah responded, and his brethren hastened to his aid. Judah was fatigued and parched with thirst, and there was no water for

him to drink, but he dug his finger into the ground with such force, that water gushed out in the sight of the whole army. Then said one warrior to the other: "Let us flee before these devils, for God fights on their side," and they all fled for their lives, pursued by the sons of Jacob. Soldiers without number they slew, and then they went back to their tents. On their return they noticed that Joseph was missing, and they feared he had been killed or taken captive. Naphtali ran after the retreating enemy, to make search for Joseph, and he found him still fighting against the Ninevite army. He joined Joseph, and together they killed countless soldiers.

At the end of the war Jacob continued his journey unhindered to his father Isaac.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GREAT WARS

1. The War With Jashub



EVEN years passed after the events at Shechem, and Jacob and his sons returned to the neighborhood of the city to make their dwelling there.

The kings of the Amorites, led by Jashub, the king of Tapuah, assembled their armies to fight the small group of people belonging to Jacob.

"Is it not enough," they said, "that they have slain all the men of Shechem? Should they now be allowed to take possession of their land too?" Judah, the lion-hearted, took ten of his servants, and with them ran in front of his brothers to meet Jashub in war. Now, Jashub was a mighty warrior, and was clad in a coat of mail from top to toe. He was mounted on a powerful steed, and cast his spears on all sides, without ever missing his aim. Judah feared neither Jashub's bravery nor his sure aim. When there was a distance of about thirty cubits between him and Jashub, he picked up a very heavy stone, and with it struck the king with all his might on his helmet, knocking him off his horse. The people of the second army saw the heroic deed of Judah and they gathered around him to kill him. But Judah drew his sword and killed the forty people who formed the body-guard of king Jashub. The king, seeing that he was left alone to fight Judah, drew his sword to cut off Judah's head. Quickly Judah raised his shield to receive the blow, but it broke in pieces. He then wrested Jashub's shield and swinging his sword with all might cut off his feet above the ankles. The king fell to the ground, his sword slipped from his grasp and Judah hurriedly seized the sword, and cut off the head of Jashub. Seeing Judah's wonderful feat, his brothers rallied to him and killed about fifteen thousand of the allied armies. The enemy,

noticing the marvelous strength of Juda and his brothers, became greatly terrified and did not care to remain any longer on the battle field to fight them. Their generals and kings ordered them not to flee, but they heeded them not. The sons of Jacob then pursued the running armies up to the gate of the city of Nazar.

On that day, three of the servants of Jacob fell in battle. Judah and his brothers, enraged at the death of the three servants, approached the walls of the city of Hazor, and wanted to enter its gates to wage war against the remnant of the armies that took refuge within its walls. But four mighty warriors were stationed at the gate with drawn swords, and refused to let them enter the city. Naphtali quickly leaped into their midst, and with his sword killed two of the warriors. The other two ran for their lives, but Naphtali pursued them, and killed them likewise. Naphtali and his brothers then tried to enter the city, but when they entered the gate they found another wall surrounding the city. They looked for the entrance, but they failed to find it. Judah then jumped to the top of the wall, and Simon and Levi jumped after him. The three of them leapt from the wall into the city, and fought with the army that was stationed there. The warriors' cries were heard by the remainder of Jacob's sons, who leapt to the top of the wall to see the cause of this out-cry. When they came there, the people of the city begged for peace, to which the sons of Jacob consented.

2. The Fall of Sarton

On the following day Jacob and his sons were informed that the people of Sarton had gathered to fight them. Now, Sarton was a very strongly fortified city, surrounded by a ditch fifty cubits deep and forty cubits wide. The people of Sarton removed all bridges because they feared the approach of Jacob and his sons. The armies that were stationed at the top of the wall, seeing Jacob and his sons approach, mocked at them when they looked for a passage to enter the city. The sons of Jacob became angry at this mockery, and they all leaped across the ditch. They found the gates of the city locked, and when they

tried to force an entrance, the armies on top of the walls began hurling stones and shooting arrows at them. Judah then jumped to the top of the wall on the eastern side of the city, Gad followed him on the west, Simon and Levi jumped to the north of the city, and Dan and Reuben to the south. Issachar and Naphtali then broke the iron gates and they all came into the city and vanquished the armies that were stationed there.

On leaving the city, the sons of Jacob happened to pass a vast tower. Out of that tower twelve mighty warriors came and assailed Simon and Levi. The warriors succeeded in breaking the shields of Simon and Levi, and even wounded Levi. When one of the warriors was about to strike him again, Levi snatched the sword away from him and with it killed the giant warrior. The remaining eleven warriors, seeing that one of their men was lying dead at their feet, rushed to Levi to avenge his death. Simeon, seeing Levi's plight, uttered a piercing war-cry, which was heard by his brother Judah at a distance. Upon hearing this, Judah, Naphtali, and some of their men ran to the assistance of their brothers. These four brothers wrestled with the eleven warriors from afternoon until evening, but without success. Naphtali then returned to his father Jacob and informed him of the event. Jacob hurried with Uaphtali to the scene of battle, and shot three arrows with which he killed three warriors in succession. The remaining eight warriors, noticing that the enemy was in front and in the rear, fled. But Dan and Asher also came to the assistance of their brothers and father, and they all pursued the warriors, and killed all of them.

3. Judah On the Wall of Goash

Jacob and his sons, being informed that the people of Goash were mustering their armies within the city to wage war against them, went to war with them. Now, Goash was a very large city, strongly fortified and with three walls around it, while the people inhabiting it were famous warriors. Approaching the walls of the city, they found the doors locked, and on the top of the outer wall, were about five hundred men. The people

of Goash placed a very big army in the out-skirts of the city, as an ambush for Jacob and his sons. The latter who were unaware of this ambush, approached the gates of the city with the intention of breaking them down. But as soon as they approached, the ambush suddenly arose from its place, and began throwing stones, spears and swords at them, while the people on the top of the wall, likewise threw all kinds of missiles at them. Judah, realizing the danger, uttered his accustomed lion's war-cry, which was so powerful, that some of the people on the top of the wall fell down from great terror. Judah and his brothers again made an attempt to break down the gates, but the stones and missiles hurled at them from the top of the wall were so dangerous, that they were compelled to go to the eastern entrance of the city. But there also they could not force the gate open. They then went to the southern entrance of the city, and there likewise they could not force an entrance. The people of Goash then ridiculed Jacob and his sons, and said: "You are no match for us. You were able to conquer other cities, but you will not be able to conquer us." And while thus ridiculing them, they shot spears and arrows at them. Hearing this insult, Judah jumped upon the top of the wall and uttered such a great cry, that many of the warriors on top of the wall fell down and were killed, but at that moment, the sword slipped out of his hand and fell to the ground. The mighty warriors of Goash noticing that Judah remained without a sword, gathered around him to hurl him from the top of the wall. Twenty of the bravest warriors approached Judah with drawn swords to kill him. Finding himself in a helpless state, he again uttered his usual lion's war-cry, and the twenty warriors, terrified by this cry, dropped their swords and fled. Judah at once snatched one of the swords, pursued the twenty warriors, and knocked them off the wall.

A certain man named Arud, who was considered the strongest and the bravest of the people of Goash, came up to the top of the wall, and was ready to strike Judah with his sword. Judah quickly raised his shield, but the blow which Arud struck was so heavy that it broke his shield in two, and inflicted a

heavy wound upon his head. He uttered a cry of pain, and Arud terrified at this cry, fell off the top of the wall, to the place where Jacob and his sons stood, and was killed by them. Dan, hearing Judah's cries, jumped to the top of the wall to aid his brother. The people on the first wall, scared at the presence of Judah's second brother, ran to the top of the middle wall, and from there threw stones and spears at them. The two brothers were in a terrible plight, because arrows and stones hailed at them from all sides. Judah mustered courage, jumped from the outer-wall to the second wall and Dan jumped after him, and from there they jumped into the city, and these two sons of Jacob waged war against all the inhabitants. Jacob and his sons, seeing that Judah and Dan were no longer on the wall, sent Naphtali to see what the cause was. Naphtali jumped to the first wall, and from the first to the second wall, and looking town into the city discovered that Judah and Dan fought against the entire population of the city of Goash. Then he gave the sign, and Jacob and his sons approached the gates of the city, forced them open and joined Judah and Dan in the fight. With their combined effort the people of Goash were defeated.

Leaving the city of Goash, Jacob and his sons encountered three of the warriors who were hidden in some secret place. One of then, noticing that Zebulun was of short stature, rushed upon him and knocked him down. Jacob ran to his aid, and slew the warrior with his sword. The second of the warriors then jumped at Jacob with the intention of killing him, but Simon and Levi came to his aid, and killed him with their swords, while Jacob ran after the third warrior and killed him also. On the sixth day of the war, Jacob and his sons returned to their tents. And on the seventh day, all the kings who were at war with Jacob and his sons held a counsel, and decided to make peace with them. When they came to Jacob for peace, he told them that they must first give up all their weapons of war, and then sign a treaty. They did so, and there was peace between Jacob and the kings of Canaan ever after.

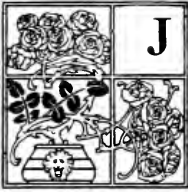
4. The War With Esau

At the end of the year Leah died. Jacob and his sons mourned for her. Esau thought to himself: "Now I have a chance to fall upon my brother and kill him." So he gathered four thousand men, armed them and proceeded to besiege Hebron, where Jacob lived. Jacob and his household had not expected any attack at that time, for they were in mourning. Esau and his men came to the top of the wall surrounding the city and began shooting arrows at them. Jacob begged his brother not to wage war against them at that time, but Esau in reply aimed arrows at him. Jacob pleaded with his sons not to follow Esau's example. But Judah, in spite of his father's remonstrations, shot an arrow at Esau and wounded him. While Esau was taken away, he ordered his men not to move from the spot before Jacob and his sons were killed. When Judah heard this order, he quickly gathered all his brothers and servants and they began to wage war against the four thousand men. Judah and his brothers fought so bravely against them, that most of them were slain and the remainder fled in confusion. Jacob and his sons being very tired from the fighting, did not care to pursue them. Esau then sent messengers to make peace with Jacob, and thereafter, there was peace between them until the death of their father Isaac.

CHAPTER XXIII

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

1. The Dreams



JOSEPH, when yet very young, was deprived of the tender care of his mother Rachel. Bilhah, formerly the hand-maid of Rachel and then the wife of Jacob, took little Joseph into her tent and took care of him.

Joseph grew up to be a kind lad, and he always kept company with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, whom the sons of Leah were accustomed to abuse. Old Jacob taught him the Torah, and he turned out to be a ready pupil.

One day he came to his father and said: "My brothers, the sons of Leah, always abuse my other brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, and call them the sons of hand-maids." The aged father at once ordered his sons to come to him from the field, and said, "I am old, and I do not know the day of my death; now, therefore, listen to my words. When I die everything I possess shall be yours, and you will all become rich; but God forbid that you abuse one another, or that you insult the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah by calling them the sons of the hand-maids."

"Why did our father see fit to call for us from the field in the middle of the day?" they asked one another on leaving their father's tent. "Somebody must have slandered us." "I know who slandered you," said one of the lads of Jacob's household, "I was present when Joseph reported all that to your father." From that time on the sons of Jacob began to hate Joseph, and when Jacob made him a beautiful coat of many colors, his brothers hated him still more. "For," said they, "our father loves Joseph more than all his brothers."

One morning Joseph related to his father a dream that he had dreamt: He and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field when his brothers' sheaves arose and bowed to his sheaf. His brothers, hearing this dream, hated him still more.

Joseph dreamed another dream which he related to his father and brothers. "In my dream," said he, "I saw the sun, the moon and eleven stars bow down before me." His brothers' hatred now grew mingled with jealousy, but Jacob no longer doubted the meaning of his dreams.

2. Joseph Thrown Into a Pit

One day the brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. Then said Jacob to Joseph, "Do not thy brothers feed in Shechem? I fear lest the Hivite come upon them and kill them, and repay on me what Simeon and Levi did to Shechem. Now, my son, hasten and go to see the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock and bring me back word."

"I know," said Joseph, "that my brothers hate me and will do me harm when alone in the field. But I must do the will of my father." So Joseph arose and went to Shechem. Arriving at Shechem and not finding them there, he began to wander about in the field. The Angel Gabriel, in the likeness of a man found him and said, "Whom art thou looking for?"

"I am looking for my brothers" answered Joseph; "pray tell me where they are pasturing their flocks."

"Thy brothers have journeyed hence, for I heard them say, "let us go to Dothan."

Joseph went after his brothers and he found them in Dothan. At that moment the brothers were preparing to dine, and Issachar said; "Brothers, let us gather together some stones and make a heap on which we can eat."

"Your words are wise," replied Simon; "but what about Joseph; he always embitters our lives by slandering us. If he only happened to come here now, I would tear him to pieces."

"I likewise hate him very much," said Issachar, "but I fear his strange dreams."

"There is nothing to fear," retorted Simon, "just as the hungry man dreams of a good meal, so does Joseph dream of reigning over us."

Simon had scarcely finished speaking, when they saw Joseph approaching. "Good!" they all shouted as one; "here comes the dreamer; let us kill him and cast him into one of the pits."

"Brothers, shedding blood is a sin," said Reuben. "Cast him into one of the pits in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him." Reuben said that in order to save him from their hands and bring him back to their father.

His brothers fell on him, and stripped him. They passed by a pit which was filled with pieces of wood, and they did not cast him in there. They then came across a pit full of serpents and adders, and into it they cast Joseph. Joseph wept bitterly and begged his brothers for mercy, but they would not listen to him. Only God in heaven listened to his prayer, and he ordered the serpents and the adders to hide themselves and stay in the holes of the pit, so that they do him no harm.

3. Joseph Sold for Twenty Pieces of Silver

The sons of Jacob sat down by the pit to eat, but the cries and supplications of Joseph touched their hearts and gave them no rest. They therefore went to a place where his cries could not be heard.

Reuben told his brothers that it was his turn on that day to wait upon their aged father Jacob, and went away. But instead of going to his father's tent he went to a nearby mountain, and there waited in hiding for night to come when he could save Joseph from the hands of his brothers and bring him to his father.

When his brothers finished their meal a caravan of Ishmaelites passed by, and Judah said: "What profit is there for us to shed our brother's blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites." His brothers agreed with him.

At that moment some Midjonites passed by. The day was very hot and the merchants suffered greatly from thirst. One

of the company noticed a large flock of birds hover over a certain place. "There is a well of water there!" he shouted with great joy to his companions, pointing to the spot where the birds were hovering. They all ran in great haste to the pit but instead of water they found a lovely boy in it, who was exhausted from weeping and hunger. For these birds were ordered by God to hover there in order to shelter Joseph with the shadow of their wings from the hot rays of the sun.

"Who are you, and who brought you here?" asked the chief of the caravan. But Joseph was so weakened that he could give him no answer. They then pulled him out of the pit and were about to take him away with them, when the sons of Jacob saw that the Midjonites were ready to depart with Joseph, and came near them and said, "Why do you take our slave away from us? We put him into this pit as a punishment because he became disobedient. Now, return our slave to us."

"Does this boy look like a slave?" said the Midjonites, "or does he look like a son of a slave? Do you mean to tell us that you are the masters of this handsome, noble-looking lad? You are speaking nothing but falsehood."

"Give us back our slave," said his brothers, "lest you die."

The Midjonites drew their swords and were ready to fight them, but Simon leaped at them and with his thunder-like voice uttered such a shout that the swords dropped from the hands of the Midjonites, and they all fell on their faces to beg for mercy. "You say that your slave is disobedient," they said, "sell him to us and we will pay you whatever he is worth."

"What price will you pay for him?"

"This lad is very delicate and unfit for work. We will give you for him twenty pieces of silver."

"Very well," they said, "each and every one of us will buy for himself a pair of sandals with his two pieces of silver."

4. The Grief-stricken Father

Reuben returned to the pit at nightfall and cried. "Joseph! Joseph!" Having received no answer, he went down into the pit feeling all over for Joseph's body, but Joseph was not there.

He went to his brothers and said, "Joseph is not there, and what shall I do now? How will I be able to see the great grief of our aged father?"

"Our brother Judah is guilty," they all said, "for he told us to sell him and we obeyed. Had he told us to return him to our father, we would have obeyed him." The sons of Jacob then arose and swore to one another to tell no one what had happened and whoever violated his oath was to be punished with death.

Then they slew a lamb, and dipped the garment of Joseph in the blood, and with a spear they pierced many holes through it. They gave it to Naphtali and told him to say this to their father Jacob: "We gathered in our cattle, and came near Shechem, where we found this garment in the road. Now, discern whether it is the coat of your son or not." Now Naphtali was very swift of foot, even swifter than the stag. So light and swift was his step that he could run on the top of cornstalks without breaking or bending them.

Jacob looked at the garment and said, "I see that it is the coat of my son. A beast has devoured him. Joseph was torn to pieces."

Towards evening the other sons returned home, and their grief-stricken father asked them where and when they found the coat of Joseph. They only repeated the story already told him by Naphtali, and the aged father mourned and wept for his beloved Joseph. The sons, seeing the grief of their father, regretted what they had done. Judah sat next to his father, put his head between his knees, and wept together with his father. All his sons then tried to comfort Jacob, but in vain, for he would not be comforted.

The aged Isaac heard of his son's misfortune, and he, too, came to comfort him. Isaac knew that Joseph was alive, for God appeared to him and told him of all that had happened, but he did not wish to tell it to Jacob. "If God did not care to tell Jacob what had happened," thought Isaac, "how can I tell it to him?"

"My sons," said Jacob to them the following day, "take your bows and arrows and go out to the field. There you may

find the body of my beloved Joseph. Be sure to catch alive the beast that ye see first and bring it to me."

So they went and caught a monstrous wolf, and they brought him to their father, saying: "This is the beast that we first met and we brought it to you."

"Why didst thou tear my beloved Joseph," inquired Jacob of the wolf. "My son was possessed of no bows and arrows and had no evil intention against thee."

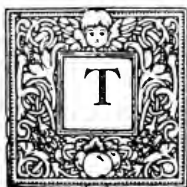
But God opened the mouth of the wolf, and he said: "Son of Isaac, I have not killed thy son. I am a wolf out of a foreign land. One morning I lost my young one, and I have been straying in all directions to find it. Is it likely that I, mourning over the loss of a wild cub, should attack and kill a young prophet?"

Touched by the wolf's words, Jacob let him go free.

CHAPTER XXIV

JOSEPH THE SLAVE

1. On the Tomb of His Mother



THE Midjonites on their way regretted having bought Joseph. "It is likely that this good-looking lad was stolen," they said to one another, "and should he be found in our possession, we will meet death." They then met a caravan of Ishmaelites with camels laden with all kinds of delicious perfumes. They were glad to meet them and offered to sell Joseph for the same amount they had bought him. The Ishmaelites made the bargain and made Joseph mount one of their camels.

Joseph did not know to which land the Ishmaelites would take him. When he heard one of them say that they would soon enter the land of Egypt, he broke out in tears. The Ishmaelites made him alight from the camel, and when he still continued his wailing, one of them struck him on the face. The hand of the smiter at once withered, but the Ishmaelites did not know that this was on account of Joseph and they continued to ill-treat him.

Joseph went along with the Ishmaelites till they reached his mother's tomb. It was moonlight, and the caravan rested. Grief overcame Joseph. He fell upon the grave, burst forth into bitter tears and cried, "O, mother, mother! I am an outcast and slave, I, the child of the wife Jacob loved. When you were dying, you bade my father to look at me and be comforted for his loss. O, mother, mother! have you no thought of thy son? Awake and see the sad plight of your child; shake off your sleep; be my defense against my brothers, and comfort my father. Awake and stand up to judge my quarrel! Awake and plead my cause with God! Awake and look upon the desolation

of the soul of my father who cherished you, and who for fourteen years served in bondage for his beloved Rachel! Console him, I pray you, and by the voice that he loved, soothe the grief of his last days."

A low voice issued from the tomb: "My son! my son Joseph! my child! I have heard your cries. I know all you have suffered, and my grief is as deep as the sea. But put your trust in God. Rise my child, and have patience. If you knew the future, you would be comforted."

Annoyed by the cries of Joseph, the Ishmaelites drove him away from the tomb.

"Bring me back to my father and he will make you rich," pleaded Joseph.

"If you had been the son of a rich man, you would not have been sold for twenty pieces of silver," said the Ishmaelites, and they began to beat him mercilessly. God in heaven heard the groaning of Joseph and he darkened the sky with a threatening cloud. There was lightning and thunder, and a terrific wind blew from every direction. The camels refused to obey their masters although they were severely punished by them.

"Let us get rid of this troublesome slave," said the Ishmaelites to one another. "Let us hurry on to Egypt and there sell him."

2. In Potiphar's House

The sun was about to set, when the caravan entered Heliopolis, the chief city of Egypt. Next day he was placed for sale before the palace of the king. All the wealthy ladies of Heliopolis sent their husbands or relatives to bid for the beautiful youth, but he was purchased by Potiphar, the king's treasurer.

Zuleika, Potiphar's wife, received him very kindly, gave him new clothes and a garden house in which to live.

Joseph proved to be a very faithful servant, and his master became fond of him. God was with him and caused to prosper whatever he did.

One day, Potiphar said to Joseph, "Bring me a cup of very hot water," and when it was brought to him he said: "I was mistaken, I wanted luke-warm water and not very hot."

"The water is luke-warm," said Joseph, and when Potiphar found it to be so, he was greatly surprised. "But I wanted wine and not water," said Potiphar. "Let my master drink of it and he will find wine in the cup," answered Joseph.

Having found wine in the cup, Potiphar said to Joseph, "Here are my keys and you be from to-day on the ruler of my house and my treasures, for I see that your God is with you."

Zuleika loved Joseph greatly. One day she made a great feast and invited all the ladies in her house. Towards the close of the banquet, when the fruit and the wine were brought in, an orange and a knife were placed before each lady. At the same moment Zuleika ordered Joseph to be brought into the room. The ladies, in their astonishment, cut their fingers instead of the oranges, for their eyes were fixed upon him, and they were amazed at his beauty.

3. Joseph In Prison

One day Zuleika brought false accusations against Joseph and Potiphar put him in prison.

When Joseph had been five years in prison, it happened that the king of Egypt ordered his butler to bring him some wine, and the chief baker to bring some cakes. In the wine served before him he found a fly and in the cakes, saw dust. Both the chief butler and the chief baker were put in prison, and Joseph was ordered to wait upon them.

After they had been in prison a full year, they had dreams in one and the same night. In the morning when Joseph came to wait upon them, he noticed that they were very sad, and he said to them: "Why are you sad to-day?"

"We had dreams last night, and there is no one to interpret them for us," they answered. "Now pray, go to the captain of the prison and ask him to send to us one of the magicians that he may interpret our dreams."

"Interpretations belong to God," said Joseph, "tell me your dreams, perhaps God will cause me to understand the meaning of them."

"You are nothing but a slave," answered the chief butler in great anger, "and how can you interpret dreams?"

"Did my master ever hear of Chintom, the very skilled physician?" asked Joseph.

"Of course I did," answered the chief baker.

"Now, let me tell you a story about this great physician."

"One day, Chintom, the very great physician, saddled his donkey, filled his bags with all sorts of medicine, and set out for foreign lands to learn wisdom from the great men there. On his way, while passing through many vilages and towns, he healed the sick free of charge, and he became very much beloved by all. Once, when about to enter one of the great cities of Canaan, a thief stole Chintom's clothes and donkey. The great physician was forced to put on a very old and torn suit of clothes, and taking a bag full of medicine with him, he entered the city. Passing through one of the streets, he was attracted by heart-rendering cries which came from the inmates of a beautiful palace. On entering he noticed a lad lying sick in bed, and his parents beseeching the three physicians that were called in to save their dear boy from death.

Chintom examined the sick lad closely and said to his parents: "I will cure this boy with the medicine in my bag, if you will only entrust him into my care." The people and the physicians, on seeing his ragged clothes, mocked him, and the parents would not permit him to come near the patient. They even drove him out of the house in shame.

The sick boy died, to the great sorrow of his parents, and Chintom said: "These people thought I was crazy when I offered to cure their boy. I am now going to tell the people who I am, and I will cure the sick freely."

"On the following morning he went through the streets of the city and proclaimed: "I am the great physician Chintou, whoever has any ailment shall come to me and I will cure him." The people thought he was crazy and paid no attention to him.

Chintom then opened his medicine bottles and the people attracted by the wonderful odor of the medicine gathered around him.

"If you are really the great physician, why are your clothes so ragged?" the people questioned him.

"Chintom told them of what had happened to him. The sick then came to him from all over the town and he cured them freely. His name soon became a blessing to all the inhabitants of the city. The father of the dead boy, on finding out how great a physician the crazy man was, tore his clothes in great anguish and cried bitterly: "I killed my dear boy, my only boy."

Through with the telling of his story, he turned to the chief butler and said: "My lord considers me as a born slave and therefore unfit to interpret dreams. But know you that I am neither a slave nor the son of a slave. My father is a rich and very good man. I was stolen from my father's house and sold as a slave in Egypt. Also here I have done no wrong that I was put in prison."

The chief butler then told his dream to Joseph: "In my dream," he said, "I saw a vine before me. In the vine there were three branches; and as it sprouted it brought forth buds, and immediately they ripened into clusters, and became grapes. I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into the king's hand."

Joseph said to him: "The three branches are three days; within three days Pharaoh shall set you free and restore you to your former office. When you are out of this prison," continued Joseph, "be mindful of me and take me out, too."

At that very moment a heavenly voice was heard saying: "Because thou hast left thy trust in Me, and hast instead reposed it in man, the chief butler shall not think of thee when out of prison, and thou shalt remain imprisoned until it is My desire that thou be set free."

The chief baker, seeing that Joseph had interpreted well, said to Joseph: "In my dream I saw three baskets upon my head, and in the upper basket there was delicious meat made by

the confectioner; and the birds came and ate them from the baskets upon my head."

Joseph answered: "The three baskets are three days. At the end of the three days, Pharaoh shall take away your head from your body, and will hang you upon a gibbet, and the birds shall eat your flesh from off you."

On the third day, the queen of Egypt gave birth to a son. The king made a great feast to which he invited all the princes and nobles of his kingdom. In the middle of the feast, Pharaoh, by a royal order, decreed that the chief butler be excused for his crime and returned to office, but the chief baker he ordered to be hanged.

CHAPTER XXV

JOSEPH THE RULER

1. Pharaoh's Dreams



AS WILLED by God, Joseph was forgotten by the chief butler, because he put his trust in man, and was left in prison for two years more. After that Pharaoh dreamt a dream. He was standing by the Nile and from it came out seven very fat cows. Seven lean cows then came up after them, and the lean cows swallowed up the fat ones. The king fell asleep again and he dreamt that he saw seven full ears of corn swallowed up by seven lean ears.

Pharaoh was greatly troubled about his dreams, and early in the morning he summoned all the magicians and all the wise men of the land to come before him to interpret his dreams.

"The seven fat cows that you saw," said some of the magicians, "show that you will beget seven daughters, and the seven lean cows swallowing the fat cows mean that your seven daughters will die. As for the ears of corn, they tend to show that you will conquer seven lands, and seven other lands will rebel against you."

"This explanation pleases me not," shouted the king in great fury. "Away with you."

Still another group of magicians and wise men offered the following explanation: "The seven tribes of Canaan will wage war against seven fortified cities of Egypt and conquer them; then the seven conquered cities will rebel against them and defeat them. As to the dream of the ears, it means that the king will marry seven wives, all of whom will die during his lifetime. Then the fourteen sons of the king will fight with one another and the seven younger ones will prevail over the seven older ones."

“Why, all this is folly!” exclaimed the disappointed king. “Begone, or you shall all suffer the penalty of death.”

2. Joseph Interprets the Dreams

“May our mighty king live forever,” said the chief butler upon prostrating himself before Pharaoh. “I must needs remind you of my sins to-day: Once Pharaoh grew angry against the chief baker and myself and put us in prison, and the two of us dreamt dreams in one night. Together with us in the prison there was a youthful Hebrew, a slave who was sold for twenty pieces of silver. We told him our dreams on the following morning, and he interpreted them to us. Now it fell out just as he had foretold, the chief baker was hanged by the king’s decree three days after that, and I was put back in my office.”

Joseph, at the command of the king, was immediately taken out from prison, and after he was shaved and washed and given new clothes, he was brought into the king’s palace.

Now Pharaoh sat on his throne wearing a golden crown on his head, and in the crown were set many precious stones. To mount the throne it was necessary to ascend seventy steps. If any one came to speak to the king, he had to stop on the first step. The visitor was then allowed to ascend as many steps as the number of languages he knew to speak. If, for instance, he knew ten languages, he was permitted to ascend to the tenth step where he sat down. In such case, the king would descend to the eleventh step, and from there speak to the visitor. When Joseph came before the king, he ascended to the third step and sat down, for he knew only three languages. Pharaoh then ascended to the fourth step, where he too sat down to speak to Joseph.

“I dreamt a dream,” said the king to Joseph, “and there is no one in the land to interpret it to me, and I was told that you understand how to explain dreams.”

“Interpretations belong to God,” replied Joseph. “Let the king relate his dreams to me, perhaps God will give me wisdom to interpret them.”

Pharaoh told Joseph the two dreams he had dreamt, and Joseph said: “God desired to let you know what He is about

to do. The seven fat cows and the seven full ears of corn represent seven years of plenty which will be in the land of Egypt, and the seven lean cows and the seven empty ears of corn signify that the years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine. And the reason the dream was repeated twice is because God will bring this about in the near future. Now let the king look for a wise man and appoint him over the land of Egypt. This man shall gather in storehouses all the food that will remain of the seven years of plenty, and preserve it for the seven years of famine, so that the people of the land may not famish."

"Your words sound wise," said the king, "but how can you prove to me that your interpretation is the true one?"

"As a token that my words are true," answered Joseph, "your wife, the Queen, will give birth to a son to-day. If this will fall out as I have said, you will know that my interpretation is the true one." When he was through speaking, he bade the king farewell and departed.

3. A Holy Letter Added to Joseph's Name

It happened on that day as Joseph had predicted, and Pharaoh quickly summoned his counsellors and said: "Can there in our whole domain be found a man wiser than Joseph? Is there a man in whom the spirit of God is as it is in Joseph? Let him then be appointed for the task he mentioned, and save our land from destruction."

"True, Joseph is very wise and possesses the spirit of God," said some of the counsellors, "but it is written in the laws of the land that no man can either be king or viceroy, unless he is able to speak all the seventy languages." While others complained and said: "How can a slave, sold for twenty pieces of silver, be made ruler in the land of Egypt?"

"On the morrow, Joseph shall be brought before me, and you will all test his wisdom, and you will be convinced that he is fit to become ruler in Egypt."

"Go," said God to Gabriel at midnight, "and teach Joseph to speak the seventy languages."

"Arise, Joseph," whispered the angel, upon touching him lightly. Joseph arose and was amazed at the wonderful light reflected from the countenance of the angel. Gabriel then began teaching him the seventy languages, and finding it very difficult, he said to him: "Now behold, I add one holy letter to thy name, so that thou wilt be able to acquire knowledge without any hardship. Thy name shall henceforth be 'Jehoseph.'" No sooner was this extra letter added to Joseph's name than his eyes were opened, and his memory became so strengthened that he was able to learn all the seventy languages in one lesson and remembered them well. The task done, the angel departed, and Joseph again was left alone in his cell.

4. Joseph Made Viceroy of Egypt

In the morning Joseph was brought before Pharaoh. He ascended all the steps of the throne, for he knew all the seventy languages. When he stood before the king on the seventieth step, he began to talk to him in the Hebrew language. The king, not being able to understand this tongue, said to Joseph: "What is the name of the language you are speaking in now?"

"This is the holy language, which my father and my brothers speak in the land of Canaan," replied Joseph.

Fearing that his servants might depose him when they became aware of the fact he is unable to speak the holy language, Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Swear to me that you will not disclose it to anybody."

"I do swear that I will not make it known to anybody in your kingdom," said Joseph.

The king immediately summoned all his counsellors, and said to them: "Is there anyone who is as wise as Joseph? Is there a man in our great land who possesses the spirit of God as Joseph does? Now," said the king turning to Joseph, "since God made you understand all this, there is none wiser than you are. You therefore shall have charge of gathering all the food of the seven years of plenty."

Pharaoh removed the ring from his hand, and putting it on Joseph's finger said: "You are the ruler in Egypt, and without

your permission no one is allowed to do anything." The king then made Joseph ride in the royal carriage throughout the land of Egypt, and wherever he came the people received him with great joy.

When the seven years of plenty set in, as Joseph had predicted, he went through the entire land and bought corn. The harvests were good and corn was plentiful, and Joseph bought it at a very low price. He built store-houses all over the country where he stored up the corn for the seven years of famine which were to come.

The seven good years passed, and the seven years of famine began. The food, which the inhabitants of Egypt put aside during the seven years of plenty, became rotten in the storehouses and unfit for food. Then they all came to Pharaoh and asked him for bread.

"O you fools!" exclaimed the king. "Did not Joseph proclaim to the whole world, that there would come seven years of plenty to be followed by seven years of famine? Why then did you not save a portion of the plentiful harvests against the need of the future?"

"The grain that we put aside during the good years has rotted in the storehouses," they replied weepingly.

"Go then to Joseph and buy corn from him," said the king.

Joseph then opened the storehouses and sold corn to the Egyptians.

THE BROTHERS BEFORE JOSEPH

1. The First Journey to Egypt



EGYPT was not the only land that suffered from the famine. Phoenicia, Arabia and Palestine also suffered from lack of corn. Old Jacob knew that corn could be gotten in Egypt, and one day he said to his sons: "Go to the land of Egypt to buy corn. But pray, do not enter the city through one gate, because your numbers may create mistrust, and your heroic handsome appearance may cause the evil eye to light upon you. You therefore enter the city of Pharaoh through different gates."

Ten of Jacob's sons departed for the land of Egypt to buy corn, Benjamin not going with them, for his father refused to let him go lest evil befall him. On their journey they thought of their brother Joseph, and they said to one another: "Joseph was carried down to Egypt. Let us make search for him, and if we find him, we will ransom him from his master. If his master refuses to sell him, we will use force, though we perish ourselves."

But Joseph expected that his brothers would be coming to Egypt, and to make sure their coming he ordered as follows: "By order of the king and his deputy, he who desires to buy grain in Egypt may not send his slave hither to buy it, but must either do it in person, or send his sons for that purpose. Any man who buys grain and sells it again to some one else, shall be put to death, for no one may buy more than he requires for the needs of his household. Also, no man is allowed to load up with grain more than one beast of burden, and he who brings two or three beasts of burden, and loads them up with grain, shall be put to death."

At the gates of Egypt Joseph stationed guards, and ordered them not to allow any person to enter the city unless he wrote down his own name and the name of his father. He also bade the guards bring to him every evening the list of those who had entered the city. One evening one porter came and gave Joseph the name of Reuben, son of Jacob; another porter came and brought in Simon, son of Jacob; a third one handed in the name of Levi, the son of Jacob; and so on to the tenth, Asher, the son of Jacob. Joseph at once gave orders for every storehouse to be closed with the exception of one. He gave the guards of the open storehouse the names of his brothers, and said to them: "When these people arrive, take them prisoners, and bring them before me."

But the brothers, instead of going to buy grain, went to seek Joseph throughout the city. For three days they searched for him everywhere, but he could not be found. The overseer of the open storehouse reported to Joseph that the ten brothers had thus far not yet come to buy corn. Joseph at once sent forth seventy mighty men of valor to make a house to house search for them in the city. They found the brothers in one place, and haled them before their master.

A large crown of gold on his head, and surrounded by his valiant men, Joseph was seated on his throne in his palace. His brothers fell down before him in great admiration. They did not recognize him, because when he was sold by them he was but a youth of seventeen, and now he was a bearded man. But he knew them, for they were all bearded men when he was separated from them.

Joseph made himself strange to his brothers. He took his cup in his hand, knocked against it, and said: "By this magic cup I know that you are spies. You came to the land of Egypt not for the purpose of buying corn, but for the purpose of spying it out and make war against it."

"We are no spies," they replied, "for your servants came here from Canaan to buy corn."

"If it be true that you came here to buy corn," asked Joseph, "why is it that every one of you entered the city by a different gate?"

"We are the sons of one man in the land of Canaan," they said, "and he bade us not to enter the city together by the same gate."

"Indeed you are spies," said Joseph. "If you really came to buy corn, why then have you lingered here for three days without buying anything whatsoever?"

"We are honest men; we are twelve brothers, the sons of one father. The youngest one is with our father in Canaan, and one disappeared. We are told that some Ishmaelites stole our brother and sold him as a slave in Egypt, and therefore we made search for him throughout the entire city."

"By the life of Pharaoh, you are spies," said Joseph. "Let us suppose you should discover your brother serving as a slave, and his master should demand a high sum for his ransom, would you pay it?"

"Of course, we would," they all answered.

"But suppose his master should refuse to surrender him for any price in the world, what would you do?"

"If he does not surrender our brother to us, we will kill the master, and carry off our brother," they exclaimed angrily.

"Why speak lies to me?" said Joseph angrily. "By my magic cup I know that two of you befell the peaceful city of Shechem and killed all the inhabitants. Now you have come down to Egypt to kill the Egyptians for the sake of your brother. I shall be convinced that you are honest men only if you consent to send one of you home and bring your youngest brother here."

His brothers refused to consent to his proposition, and Joseph caused them to be put in prison, where they remained for three days. They did not resist the imprisonment, for they knew that it came to them as a punishment from God for that they took no pity on their own brother.

On the third day they were again brought before Joseph, and he said to them: "I fear God, and therefore I will allow you to return home with food on condition that one of you remain here as hostage, and when you bring your youngest brother with you, you can take your brother and go."

"I warned you not to sin against our brother," shouted Reuben to his brothers. "Now we receive our just punishment

for two wrongs, the wrong against our brother and the wrong against our father."

The brothers of Joseph did not know that the viceroy of Egypt understood their language, because Manasseh, the eldest son of Joseph, acted as interpreter between them.

Joseph decided to keep Simon as hostage, for he, together with his brother Levi, had advised the other brothers to put Joseph to death. When the brothers consented to leave Simon behind as hostage, he said to them: "You desire to do with me as you did with Joseph."

"What can we do?" they replied in despair. "Our households will perish of hunger."

"Do as you please," retorted Simon, "but as for me, let me see the man that will venture to cast me in prison."

Joseph ordered seventy fighting men of Pharaoh's body-guard to cast him down and hand-cuff him. But when they approached, Simon gave a scream, and the seventy fell back on the ground, and their teeth went down their throats. Pharaoh's valiant men and all those that stood around Joseph fled in confusion, only Joseph and his son Manasseh remained calm and unmoved.

"Hah!" said Joseph to Manasseh, "throw a chain about his neck."

Manasseh dealt Simon a blow on the back of his neck, and chained him.

Joseph's brothers were amazed at the strength of the youth, and Simon said to them: "This blow comes not from an Egyptian but from one of the family."

Simon was bound and taken prisoner in the presence of his other brothers, but when they were out of sight, Joseph visited Simon in prison and treated him with great kindness. He also commanded his servants to serve Simon with the best of meals.

Joseph then returned to his nine brothers and said to them: "Now you can go back to your aged father with plenty of food, but remember that you must bring your youngest brother with you. If you do as you were bidden, your brother Simon will be freed."

"We will do as our lord has commanded us," they all replied.

On the way home they stopped at an inn, and when Levi opened his sack to give his camel corn, he exclaimed to his brothers: "Here I found the money which I had paid the overseer of the storehouse for the corn."

They all trembled greatly and said: "Where, then, is the loving-kindness of God toward our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, seeing that He has delivered us into the hands of the Egyptian king, that he may raise accusations against us?"

And Judah said: "Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother Joseph, and we have sinned against God, in that we sold our brother, our own flesh, into slavery. Why then do you ask, 'Where is the loving-kindness of God towards our fathers?' "

"Did I not say to you, 'Do not sin against the lad,' but you would not listen," said Reuben. "Now the Lord does demand him from us. How then can you say, 'Where is the loving-kindness of God toward our fathers?' "

They stayed in the inn over night, and in the morning they proceeded on their journey home. Their aged father met them on the way, and he was amazed not to see Simon among them. In reply to his questions, they told him of all that had befallen them in Egypt.

When they opened their sacks and everyone of them found the money he had paid for the corn, they were all greatly frightened, and Jacob cried out: "What have you done? I sent Joseph to you to see whether it be well with you, and you said, 'An evil beast had devoured him'. Simon went forth with you to buy corn, and you say, 'The king of Egypt has cast him into prison.' And now you will take Benjamin away and kill him, too. You will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"Slay my two sons, if I do not bring him back to you," said Reuben to his father.

"Are not your sons as dear to me as my own? Are not your sons equally mine? What will it profit me if I slay your two sons?" asked the sorrow-stricken father.

Reuben made no reply, for he knew that it was unwise for him to have spoken thus to his father. Judah, who was the

leader of his brothers and whose word was law to them, said: "Brothers, do not insist that our father consent now to send Benjamin with us. A time will come when our bread will give out and our father will then have to consent to let Benjamin go with us."

2. The Second Journey to Egypt

The food brought from Egypt was eaten up, and the family of Jacob began to suffer hunger. The little children came to him and said: "Grand-father, pray give us bread so that we may not die from hunger." The aged Jacob was moved by the demand of the little ones, and their words brought tears into his eyes. He called together his sons and said to them: "Go down again to Egypt and buy food."

"But the man warned us not to come back to Egypt unless we bring Benjamin with us," said Judah.

"Wherefore did you deal so ill with me as to tell the man that you had yet a brother?" complained Jacob.

"The man knows everything," replied Judah. "Why, he even knew the very wood of which our baby cribs were made. Pray, father," continued Judah, "send the lad with us, and we will go down to Egypt, and if I do not bring him back to you safe and sound, I shall have sinned against you all the days. I shall forfeit my portion in the world to come, if I do not fulfill my promise."

Jacob was compelled to let Benjamin go down to Egypt with his other sons. He gave them presents for the ruler of Egypt, and he put in their hands money with which to buy corn, and also the money that was found in their sacks. After all this was done, he said to his sons: "Here is money, here is a present, and here is also your brother Benjamin. Is there anything else that you need?"

"Yes, father," they replied, "we need your blessing and your prayer to God for us."

And Jacob prayed thus: "Thou, O Lord, who at the time of the creation didst set a limit to heaven and earth, and didst say to them 'Enough' when they did stretch themselves further and further, set a limit to my sufferings, too, and say to them

'Enough'. Give my sons mercy before the ruler of Egypt that he restore to me all my sons in peace." The woman and children also prayed to God that he redeem their fathers and husbands out of the hands of the king of Egypt. And amid prayers and weeping the sons of Jacob once more set out for the land of Egypt.

3. Joseph Makes Himself Known to Benjamin

Joseph was overjoyed to learn that Benjamin had come to Egypt with his brothers. He ordered his son Manasseh, who was the steward of the house, to bring the men into the palace, and make ready a meal for them. Standing at the door of Joseph's house, they said to the steward: "In our own country, we supported others, and now we have to depend upon you to support us, and we came to buy food from you. When we came to an inn and opened our sacks of corn, each and every one of us found the money he paid for the corn in his sack, and we all brought it back to you."

"Do not worry about the money," said the steward. "I received the money for the corn. The God of your fathers caused you to find a treasure in your sacks."

The steward then brought out Simon to them. Their brother told them that he had been treated with great kindness and that he had been released from prison the very moment they left the city.

At noon Joseph made his appearance, and Judah took Benjamin by his hand and presented him to the viceroy, while they all bowed down to him to the earth. Joseph placed his hands on Benjamin's head and said: "God be gracious to you, my son."

"How is your old father, is he well?" inquired Joseph.

"Your servant, our father, is well," they replied.

Joseph was so moved at the sight of Benjamin that he had to go to his own chamber and weep. When he came back, he ordered the table to be set in three divisions, for himself, for his brothers and for the Egyptians. He then took his cup, raised it and said: "By this magic cup I know that Judah is king, there-

fore let him sit at the head of the table, and let Reuben the first born take the second seat at Judah's right." He then seated the brothers together who were of the same mother, and when he reached Benjamin he said: "I know that the youngest of you has no mother, and also I have none, therefore he may take his place next to me."

The brothers were greatly astonished at the viceroy's wisdom. When they were all seated and feasted, Joseph said to Benjamin: "Have you a brother born by your own mother?"

"I had one, but I do not know what became of him," answered Benjamin.

"Have you a wife?" asked Joseph again.

"Yes, I have a wife and ten sons," replied Benjamin.

At night when everybody was asleep, Joseph ordered that Benjamin be brought to his private chamber.

"Now," said Joseph to Benjamin upon entering the room, "I was told that the Hebrews know all wisdom, but are you acquainted with any of this?"

"Your servant is skilled in all wisdom, which my father has taught me," replied Benjamin.

"Now then," said Joseph "look at this wonderful drawing, and tell me where Joseph, your lost brother, can be found."

Benjamin looked upon the wonderful map, examined it closely, and to his great surprise he discovered that he who sat next to him was his lost brother.

Joseph, noticing Benjamin's amazement, asked, "What have you seen there?"

"I can see by this that my brother Joseph is sitting here before me," replied Benjamin.

"I am your lost brother!" exclaimed Joseph. They embraced one another and wept for great joy. "Now," continued Joseph, "do not tell it to our brothers, but wait until I myself make it known to them. I will send you with them when they go away to-morrow, but I will order them to be brought back to me, and I will take you away from them. If they risk their lives and fight for you, I will make myself known to them. But if they forsake you, I will keep you, that you should remain with me, and I will not make myself known to them."

Joseph ordered his steward to fill the men's sacks with corn, to return each man's money in his sack, and to put his magic cup into Benjamin's sack.

On the morrow, as soon as the morning was light, Joseph dismissed his brothers with kind words, and they started on their homeward journey.

4. The Thief

They were not yet far from the city gates, when Joseph told his son Manasseh, the steward of his house, to run after them, and look for the silver cup which he had hidden in Benjamin's sack.

The steward overtook the eleven brothers and called out to them to halt. "Why have you stolen my master's magic cup?" he asked on approaching them.

The brothers were greatly alarmed upon hearing this accusation, and said: "With whomsoever the cup is found, let him die, and we also will be the slaves to our master."

"I will not be so hard," said the steward; "he with whom the cup is found shall be the slave, and the rest of you shall be blameless."

He began searching for the cup; he began at Reuben, the eldest, and left off at Benjamin, the youngest, and in his sack the silver cup was found.

In their fury the brothers rent their clothes, and shouted at Benjamin: "Oh you thief and son of a thief! Your mother brought shame upon our father by stealing the images of our grandfather Laban, and now you bring shame upon us by stealing a cup."

The brothers returned to the city, and were brought before Joseph.

"Why have you stolen my magic cup? I know well, you took it in order to find out with its help where your lost brother is. Now, the youth who stole my cup shall remain with me as a slave, but as for you, you can go in peace to your father."

5. Judah Pleads

Joseph carried off Benjamin by force, and locked him up in a chamber. But Judah broke the door open, and entering the chamber with his brothers said to Joseph: "Permit me to speak a few words to you."

"You have my permission," said Joseph.

"You are doing a wrong to us," said Judah. "We came here to buy corn, and you accused us of being spies. You then inquired about our family, and we told you that we had an old father and a younger brother. You took away Simon from us, and warned us not to return to Egypt unless Benjamin be with us. Now, you are like Pharaoh in that you make a promise and keep it not. You said: 'Bring your youngest brother to me, that I may look at him.' Do you call this looking at him? If you desire to have a slave, pray keep me in his stead, for I am braver and stronger than he is. Your servant, our father, is very fond of the lad, and finds consolation in him after his wife Rachel and his son Joseph. How then can I come to your servant, our father, when the lad is not with us?"

At that moment a voice came down from heaven and said: "Because Joseph heard his brother Judah say ten times, 'Your servant our father,' and he remained indifferent when he thus heard his father being humiliated, I shall take away ten years from the length of time he is destined to live. He shall die an untimely death, and his days shall hence be only one hundred and ten years."

When Judah saw that Joseph remained unmoved to his plea, he said: "For the sake of one woman two of us destroyed the mighty city of Shechem. If your life is dear to you, return Benjamin to us and let us go."

Joseph still obstinate, Judah uttered his lion-like outcry. The noise was so strong that Joseph's valiant men lost their teeth, and the cities of Pithom and Raamses were destroyed. Judah's rage began to show signs of breaking out: he took iron rods, bit them with his teeth and spat them out as fine powder. He then furiously exclaimed: "If you do not return Benjamin to us, I shall draw my sword out of its sheath."

"If you draw your sword out, I shall use it on your neck," answered Joseph.

"Beware, lest I open my mouth and swallow you," threatened Judah.

"If you open your mouth," responded Joseph, "I shall stuff it up with a rock."

"But we have not come here for the sake of making war against you and destroy Egypt," pleaded Judah again; "return Benjamin to us and let us go. How can I go up to my father when the lad is not with us? What can I say to him?"

"Say to your father, 'The rope has followed after the water bucket,'" said Joseph.

"I hate falsehood!" exclaimed Judah.

"He who sold his own brother for twenty pieces of silver, and reported the shameful lie to his father, 'An evil beast has devoured him,' should now abstain from telling a falsehood?" laughed Joseph.

"Judah became very angry and said, 'Return Benjamin to us, or I shall dye the entire land of Egypt with blood.'"

"Oh, yes, you and your brothers are famous dyers," said Joseph; "you dyed the city of Shechem with blood, and also the coat of your brother you dyed with blood and brought it to your father and said: 'An evil beast has devoured him.'"

And Judah's rage again began to show signs of breaking out: his right eye shed tears of blood, and the hair above his heart grew so stiff that it pierced and rent the five garments in which he was clothed. When Joseph observed this he made a sign and Manasseh stamped on the ground so forcibly that the whole palace shook. Judah beholding this said: "Only one belonging to our family can stamp thus!" And he again began speaking softly to Joseph: "Pray give us our brother and let us return to our father."

"I have already decreed that the thief must remain with me as a slave," said Joseph firmly, and, to show his own wonderful strength, he pushed his foot against the marble pedestal upon which he sat, and it broke into splinters.

"This one is a great hero!" exclaimed Judah, and he tried to draw his sword from its scabbard to kill Joseph, but he was

not able to do so, because the weapon could not be made to budge. Then he said to his brothers: "This man is as God-fearing as we are."

"Why do you speak so much, while your older brothers, Reuben, Simon and Levi stand by silent?" asked Joseph.

"I alone was surety to my father for Benjamin, saying: 'If I do not bring him back to you, let me bear the blame forever, in this world and in the world to come,' " replied Judah.

"Why did you not stand by your other brother when he was sold for twenty pieces of silver? You then disregarded the great grief of your father, but you dipped his coat in blood, sent it to your father and said: 'This coat have we found.' Joseph had done no evil, while this Benjamin is a thief. Go then to your father and say to him: 'This son, too, was devoured by a wild beast.' "

Judah uttered a wild cry which caused all city walls to fall in ruins, the faces of Pharaoh's valiant men to become disfigured and Pharaoh and Joseph to be flung from their thrones. All of Judah's brothers, who had kept quiet until now, also fell into a rage, and stamped on the ground with their feet until it became full of furrows.

"Go forth, Naphtali," commanded Judah, **"and count all the streets of the city."**

The swift messenger soon returned and reported that there were twelve streets in the city.

"Now, brothers, be brave, behave yourselves like men, and let us destroy the whole city," said Judah. "I will take upon myself to destroy three streets, and each and everyone of you one street, and thus we will destroy Egypt as we destroyed Shechem."

When Pharaoh learned the cause of the terrible uproar, he advised Joseph to grant the Hebrews their demand.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LOST SON RESTORED

1. Joseph Makes Himself Known



JOSEPH resolved to make himself known to his brothers, for he saw that they were on the point of destroying the land of Egypt, and he began to speak gently to Judah and his brothers: "You say that one of your brothers was lost and is dead. He is not. I shall call him and he shall come forward." And he began to call: "Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither! Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither!"

The brothers looked around and could see no one come. "Why do you look here and there?" said Joseph. "I am your brother Joseph whom you sold as a slave. Now, brothers, do not be grieved that you sold me here, for God sent me here to preserve many lives."

The brothers would not believe him, but Joseph at last convinced them that he was their brother. They then approached Joseph, and he, weeping, embraced and kissed them all in turn.

Pharaoh was greatly pleased to learn that the great heroes, who not long ago threatened the destruction of the entire city, were the brothers of his beloved viceroy, and he sent his servants to Joseph that they take part in his joy. He also sent word to Joseph that it would please him well if his brothers would come to live in Egypt, and he promised to give them the best part of the land for their dwelling-place.

Joseph gave all his brothers new clothes, embroidered with gold and silver, and ten wagons in which to bring over their families, and for his father he sent the very same wagon in which he had ridden when he first became viceroy in Egypt. For each and every one of his brothers' children he sent beautiful clothes and one hundred pieces of silver, and for the wives of his

brothers he sent royal garments, such as were worn by the queen of Egypt. To his sister Dinah he sent silver and gold embroidered clothes and many precious gifts.

Joseph accompanied his brothers, and when he took leave of them he said: "Go to Canaan and tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and take him together with your wives and children and come hither. Do not quarrel on the way as to who was guilty in having caused me to be sold as a slave, and take heed not to inform our father suddenly of the good news."

2. Jacob Receives the Good News

Happy and with merry hearts the brothers this time journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. When they reached the boundary of Canaan, they said to one another: "How can we inform our father that Joseph is still alive? Such glad news may frighten him, and besides he may not believe us."

On coming close to their homes, they beheld Serah, the daughter of Asher, coming out to meet them. Serah was a very wise and beautiful maiden and was skilled in playing the harp. The brothers now thought of a good plan. They gave Serah a harp, and said to her: "Go and play before your grandfather Jacob, and sing the following words: "Joseph, my uncle, lives! Joseph, my uncle, lives! He is not dead. He is the ruler over the whole land of Egypt."

Serah took the harp and hurried towards Jacob's tent. On entering she said, "Peace be to you, dear grandfather."

"May peace be with you forever," came the reply.

She then sat down in front of Jacob, and with a very sweet melodious voice she sang the following words, accompanying herself upon the harp: "Joseph, my uncle, lives! Joseph, my uncle, lives! He is not dead! He is the ruler over the whole land of Egypt." She repeated these words several times, and her sweet music brought joy and comfort to Jacob's sad heart.

"Continue singing these very amusing words, my child," said Jacob to Serah. She repeated the song again and again, and Jacob grew more joyful and delighted. He then approached Serah, and putting his hands on her head, said: May death

never have power over you, for you have revived my spirit." And so it was. Serah did not die, she entered Paradise alive.

While Jacob was thus speaking to Serah, his sons appeared, clothed in their beautiful clothes, and having with them all the beautiful presents Joseph had given them. "Glad news!" they all exclaimed upon seeing their father; "Joseph lives. He is the ruler over the land of Egypt, and he sends you a message of joy."

"I can not believe such tidings," said the astonished Jacob.

"Look at the presents he sent," they said, pointing to the most beautiful wagons and other things of magnificence.

When the aged Jacob saw all this, he no longer doubted the good news, and he praised the Lord God in heaven for His loving kindness. God appeared to him and said: "Jacob, Jacob, fear not to go down to Egypt, for I shall be with thee even there. I will make a great nation out of thee, and I will deliver them from the Egyptian bondage."

Encouraged by God's promise, Jacob and his family set out for the land of Egypt. He sent on Judah ahead to build a dwelling for him and also schools where he could at once start to instruct his children in the law of God. Joseph was greatly pleased to hear from Judah that their father was nearing Egypt. "Now," said Joseph to himself, "the Egyptians will no longer say that a slave rules over Egypt. When they see my father and my brothers they will be convinced that I was a free-born man, of noble stock."

3. Jacob in Egypt

Joseph made ready his chariot with his own hand, without waiting for his servants to even help him. When the nobles of Egypt saw Joseph making preparations to meet his father, they did the same. Joseph and the nobles were followed by countless men marching to the sound of all sorts of musical instruments. Even the women of Egypt ascended the roofs of the houses and the walls of the city ready to greet Jacob.

Joseph, wearing the royal crown upon his head, rode in his chariot ahead of the procession. When he noticed the cha-

riot in which his father rode, he descended from his chariot and walked the rest of the way on foot. Upon coming close to his father he bowed himself before him down to the earth, and all the people with him also prostrated themselves. Then Joseph fell upon his father's neck and wept bitterly.

Joseph took some of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh. He chose the weakest of them, so that the king might not be tempted to keep them in his service as warriors. He introduced them as shepherds, and as the Egyptians, who worshiped the ram, kept aloof from shepherds, Pharaoh gave them the pasture land of Goshen for their dwelling.

Joseph then presented his father before Pharaoh. Now, the entrance which led to the palace was purposely made very low, so that all who enter would have to bow to the idol placed opposite the door. When Jacob was about to enter the palace, an angel came down and raised the upper door post so that the pious Jacob might not be forced to bow before idols. When the king saw that he could not believe his own eyes. He thought that Abraham was standing before him, because many years ago when Abraham was about to enter the palace, the upper door-post of the entrance was likewise raised for his sake.

"How old are you?" asked the amazed king.

"I am one hundred and thirty years old," answered Jacob.

Pharaoh then knew that a descendant of Abraham was before him, and not Abraham himself.

On leaving the palace, Jacob blessed the king and said: "May the Nile always overflow its banks and water the fields of the land."

4. Jacob's Last Wish

For seventeen years Jacob and his family lived happily in the land of Goshen. When Jacob felt his end approach, he called Joseph to his bedside and said to him: "When I die, bury me not in the land of Egypt, but bury me in the Cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan, together with my fathers Abraham and Isaac. I know," continued Jacob, "that Egypt will some day be smitten with the plague of vermins, and I desire that my corpse be not exposed to such uncleanness. I likewise fear that, in

case I am buried in Egypt, the Egyptians among whom I am considered a saint, may come and worship my grave even as they worship an idol."

Joseph swore to his father that he would fulfill his wish and carry him out of the land of Egypt, and added: "As you command me to do, so will I beg my brothers, on my death-bed, to fulfill my last wish and carry my body from Egypt to Canaan."

Now Jacob desired to bless the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, but with his prophetic eye he saw Jeroboam, the descendant of Ephraim, and Jehu, the descendant of Manasseh, how they seduced Israel to worship idols. As he was about to lay his hands upon the heads of his grandsons, the divine spirit forsook him.

"I cannot bless your children, my son," said Jacob to Joseph, "for their descendants Jeroboam and Jehu will cause my descendants to worship idols."

Disappointed by his father's refusal, Joseph prayed to God that He restore the prophetic spirit to his father so that his children may be blessed. God listened to his prayers, and Joseph put his sons before his father in such wise that Manasseh should stand opposite Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim opposite his left hand.

Jacob, however, put his right hand on Ephraim's head, and turning to Joseph he said: "I know that Manasseh shall become great, for from him judge Gideon shall descend. But his younger brother will be the ancestor of Joshua, who will bring the sun and the moon to a standstill." He then blessed the lads that they become the ancestors of two great tribes, and that God protect them from evil.

5. The Death of Jacob

After Jacob had blessed each of his sons separately, God took his soul with a kiss. All the sons of Jacob tore their garments, threw themselves upon the ground and wept bitterly. All the princes and lords of the land of Egypt upon hearing of Jacob's death, came to weep and mourn over him. Thus they all mourned over him for seventy days.

When the days of mourning were over, Joseph went to Pharaoh to obtain from him permission to carry his father from Egypt to Canaan.

"No, you cannot carry out your father from this land," said Pharaoh.

"But I swore to him before he died," replied Joseph, "that I would carry him out."

"You must then disregard your oath," insisted the king.

"O," said Joseph, "if I am permitted to disregard an oath, then I will also disregard the oath I took for your sake, and disclose it to all your servants that you are not able to speak Hebrew."

"An oath is holy, you must not disregard it," said the embarrassed king, "and go to the land of Canaan and bury your father there."

Joseph then ordered his father's body to be placed in a bier of ivory covered with gold and studded with precious gems. The bier was borne by the sons of Jacob. In front of them marched the valiant men of Pharaoh and the heroes of Joseph, all girded with swords and clothed in coats of mail. Behind the bier marched the princes of Egypt, followed by all the inhabitants of the land.

The kings and the inhabitants of Canaan, on learning the cause of the great procession through their lands, also joined in the march.

When the sons of Jacob were about to lower the body of their father into the cave of Machpelah, Esau said to them: "You have no right to take away my grave. In this cave there is room only for four pair. Since Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah were buried there, there remained only two more graves, one for my brother Jacob and the other one for myself. But my brother gave his grave away to his wife Leah; therefore this last grave belongs to me and not to him."

"But you sold your share in the cave to our father long ago," argued Joseph, "and we have a bill of sale for that in Egypt."

"Let this document be produced," said Esau, "and I shall withdraw my claim."

The sons of Jacob sent Naphtalli, the fleet runner, back to Egypt to bring the bill of sale. Meantime, Hushim, the son of Dan, who was deaf and did not know the cause of the delay, inquired why his grandfather lay unburied. When he was told that that hairy man had caused all this delay, he felt indignant. He seized a club, and with one mighty blow killed his uncle. Esau's eyes fell out of their sockets and dropped upon Jacob's knees, and Jacob opened his eyes and smiled. Jacob was then buried in the Cave of Machpelah, in accordance with his own wish.

6. Joseph Unrevengeful

On his return to Egypt from Canaan, Joseph passed the pit into which his brothers had once cast him, and looked into it very thoughtfully. He then raised his eyes heavenward and praised the Almighty God for his kindness.

"Now," said the brothers to one another, "since our father is no more, Joseph will hate us and he will perhaps wreak vengeance upon us." They therefore sent Bilhah to Joseph with the message: "Thus has our father commanded before his death, 'Forgive the sin of your brothers.'"

Grieved by his brothers' suspicion, Joseph called them together and said: "You are to be like the stars of heaven. If ten stars were unable to harm one star, how then can one star harm ten? Be of good cheer and put your trust in God."

Not only did Joseph act kindly towards his own brothers, but with the Egyptians as well. He was always ready to give them aid and counsel, and he therefore became beloved by all.

When Joseph was seventy-one years old, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt died. The king's last wish was that Joseph might be a father to his youthful son Magron, who was to be the successor to the throne. Joseph then ruled thirty-nine more years in the land of Egypt as Magron's viceroy, and the longer he ruled the more beloved and respected he became not only by the Egyptians, but also by the inhabitants of many other lands.

7. The Death of Joseph

On his death-bed Joseph called together all his brothers and said to them: "I am about to die, and I desire of you to carry my bones out of this land into the promised land, when God will visit you and take you out of the land of Egypt."

When his brothers swore to fulfill his wish and bury his bones in Palestine, Joseph stretched out his feet and died at the age of one hundred and ten years. All Israel mourned for him and the whole of Egypt was in great grief.

The magicians of Egypt came to Pharaoh and said to him: "Know you, that the people of Israel could not leave Egypt without the corpse of Joseph. Now, therefore, let Joseph's coffin be placed somewhere where no one could lay hand on it."

"What is your counsel then?" asked the curious king.

"Let Joseph's corpse be placed in a tightly sealed leaden coffin, and we, with our secret arts, will let it down into the river Nile whence no human being could remove it."

By the order of the king Joseph was accordingly put into a leaden coffin, closely sealed on all sides, which was sunk by the magicians somewhere in the Nile.

Upon the death of Joseph, the Egyptians pillaged his house, and in the booty taken by them was a wonderful rod which they brought to the king's palace. This was the rod that God created in the twilight of the first Sabbath Eve, and gave it to Adam. From Adam it descended to Enoch, then to Noah, then to Shem, and Abraham, and Isaac, and finally to Jacob who brought it to Egypt and gave it to Joseph.

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